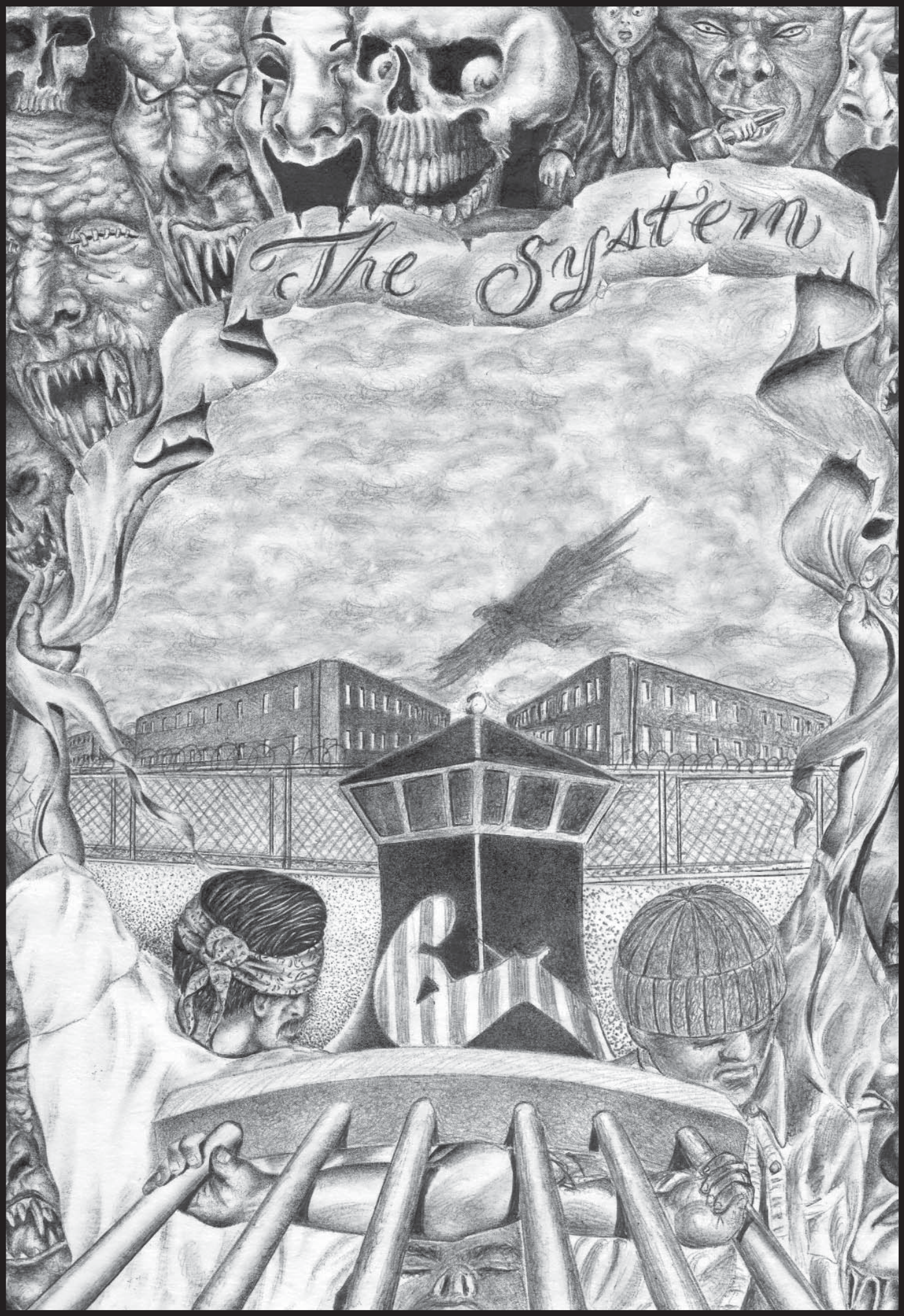




The Beat Within

Illustration by Michael Orozco



Welcome Beat readers to another week of The Beat Within and yet another "phat" editor's note to read and hopefully be inspired by. As is this editor's hope, this new tradition continues in spreading the wealth when it comes to guest ed note writers. And this week we have the immensely talented and dedicated Mervyn Wool who has so kindly stepped up to the plate to share a little bit of this and that.

FYI, We first met Mervyn when he was a young teen in the SF/YGC max unit back in the late nineties, when he was truly fighting for his life with a very high profile case. When we first met him, he had very little skills as a writer, and English was truly a second language. Over time, two years in the hall before being sent off to the CYA, Merv truly stepped up game and became one of our all time favorite Beat contributors, known to many as Pure Dragon. During his time in CYA, Merv consistently maintained contact with us, and upon paroling from CYA, Merv immediately came to work for us as an intern, slowly proving his value and graduating to a fulltime paid position, and has had the great privilege to return to his old haunt in juvenile hall to help inspire the young men and women to see that there is hope, and a better way, if you are serious about change. With that said, lets give the floor to our man Merv. Merv!

Man, man, man, here we go again, another editor's note by Mervyn Wool. Ha, I wonder if I made any sense in the last one I wrote? It's early Thursday morning and I am still half awake half asleep. It's not that easy trying to balance two jobs at once. Life is not as easy as we know it. Everyday is a constant struggle to survive the temptation of the streets. Everyday I have to remind myself what I have been through and what I went thru, to get to where I am at today. I have worked too hard to give up now and go back to the old ways.

Today, I want to touch up on a topic that was presented a couple of weeks ago, and that topic is "One thing you will give to get one thing back (Fair Trade)." Well, for me it's more like what is one thing I would give up to get one thing that I wish I would have gotten. That one thing that I want is communication. You see, my father and I never really got to communicate. Every time we get together, we get into an argument or I end up yelling at him and or walking away. And now he is recovering (health problems) at home and I only go visit him once in a while and I feel bad for that, but I can't help it. I just don't feel right around him. I don't know how to talk to him or communicate with him without ending up annoyed or angry.

My girl friend always encourages me to talk to him like a son, to ask how he is doing, and to go see him, but I just can't. I don't feel anything. I know I love him as a father but... see and there is that but... not enough to really be a caring son. Know what I mean?

I would give up what I have today to change everything, to change the way I see my father, to change the way I think of him, and just to get some communication going on.

I don't want my child growing up treating me the same way I treated my father when I grow old. I want to be able to talk to my child(ren), to have them come to me when they have problems, to talk me about anything and feel comfortable around me. I want them to be able to talk to me about anything!

Sometime I kind of feel like I am cold blooded, yet again, I know I love my father but just can't express my love for him like any other person towards their father. To me, having a father is not different from not having one. I remember my father one time back in the days said he got fired because of me, because I cussed his co-worker out. Come on, I was only seven (years old)! Plus, he really never was like a father to me, he was just someone that I call father and was there. So that's why I guess I feel the way I do.

Okay enough, let's change the topic here, shall we? Life nowadays is hard, but damn worth it. After doing workshop for four years straight, I kind of miss them. I had to stop doing workshop at SF/YGC (juvenile hall) because I need to make time for my other job. My goal now is to save enough money to get my own house. I know I could easily make enough to get that house if I started hustling again, but it's not damn worth it right now. Once you are older, things around you and the way you think tends to grow with you.

A few weeks ago, I went down to a bar with an old friend of mine, and along with him were a few other guys that I didn't know, whom one of them seem to know me. Knew what I was locked up for and the guys that was involved in that situation. This guy said, "that's was messed up what they did to you, and if you want to, you still can get back to them. I can call them out for you!" I laughed silently inside and told him with a straight face, "It's okay, that's in the past. And I have more important goals now."

Sometime I even surprise myself how the way I think how my life has change dramatically from before. Before it was all about money, fame, and respect. When people disrespect you, you get them. Now, I rather walk away from a fight then to start one or be in one. Some people might think this is a coward act, but to me, this is just being a man.

People have different definitions to being a man and mines, well, it's different from most of what I've heard before. Being able

to take care of yourself, your family, and not have them worried about you is a man. Being able to walk away from trouble is a man. Listening to yourself and not any other man tell you want to do or even influence you is being a man.

I used to think that having money, respect from those on the streets, and fame is being a man. Well, that was just being plain stupid. You can have all the respect you want, all the money you need, and all the fame you can have, but what is that point if you can't be with those that you love? What is the point when everyone you love is living and moving on with their life, while you are sitting in a cell looking at four walls?

I know we all want the nice things in life and some of us will be able to have it as long as we are willing to work for it like all the other people that work hard for their money. Of course the easy way out is to do illegal things, to sell them drugs on the street corner, but don't people ever get tired of that life? Always having to live on the edge and always having to get scared when the cops roll through? I rather work a little hard than to have to watch my back all the time. I know what I am doing right now will all be worth it in the long run. I might not see it now, but I know it will at the end.

I have been with The Beat for four years now (since paroling from CYA) and throughout these four years, I got to work with a lot of different kinds of people and I've also seen a lot of people going in and out of jail. So is the temptation of the streets that desiring? Enticing? Maybe it is, maybe it's not. Only you all that is still into the game will know.

Well, it's almost that time and I am running out of words. Seems like these days I hardly get the chance to write and when I do write, I tend to go on and on and on and at the end, don't know if I even made any damn sense. I am no longer the same writer I used to be, at least that is what I think. Maybe I am getting old.

David was talking about how old some of our co-worker were when he met them from the halls and he said, "I've known Mervyn since he was 15" and I thought to myself, damn the years are flying by past. All right y'all, that's it for me and like David always says, "The Beat goes on..."

Whew! We need to get Merv to step up to the plate and take a few swings more often, the man makes a lot of sense.

Moving right along, lets get to the topics that were address in our workshops which inspired most of the writing that's in this issue. The topics are/were, "What's One Thing You Regret Doing?"—In this life nobody is perfect. We all have made and are still making mistakes. What we want for this week is for you to tell us about one or more things that you regret doing.

Our second topic, "Misguided"—How do you define misguided? When you hear of the word, what do you think of? Who is misguided? Do you know of someone who is misguided? Are you misguided sometimes but not other times? When did it hit you that you were misguided? Is it too late for one to change who has been misguided? When was a time you were misguided, how did you respond, what came out of this? Did you/can you confront the person who misguided you? Now tell us your thoughts on being misguided. We would love to hear a tale or two of one who has been misguided.

Lastly, "Who Is The Worst Teacher You Ever Had? And Why?"

OK, there is still plenty of time to contribute to our latest editorial note writing contest, which is open to all, young and old, incarcerated or not. Before we recognize this week's top writers, allow us to announce that yes, we have our 15th and latest editorial note contest to consider, here's the subject, "Turning Back the Hands Of Time." Tell us if you could turn back the hands of time would you? How far back would you go? What would you change? How would your life have turned out differently? Sure you could also tell us that you would not turn the hands back, but tell us why is that? Turning back the hands of time is a phrase we have heard time and time again, so tell us your take on it. Share your story, share your thoughts. If you had such power to rid the pains that have brought you to such a place would you turn the hands of time back?

Like we said, this contest is open to all Beat writers. All submissions need to be in by May 1, 2006, (yes we changed the deadline, given our own hectic schedules). The First-place writer will receive a one-hundred dollar money order. Second place receives fifty-dollars, and third and fourth place will receive twenty-five dollars each. Best of luck writers, in telling us your written story/poem that relates to turning back the hands of time.

Looks like we are running into OT (Over Time), so allow us to cut this note with the praise of Drew, Lil' Jamar, Reeseis Butercup, Shotgun, Nick, Smokey, Diabolito, and Shorty, all from the 150 Crew. From SF/YGC we have Big B, Game Tight, and Rene. Also, from Walden House PSK we have Hyphy and last but not least Scorpion from Marin, they are this week's POW (Piece Of the Week) recipients!

This issue goes out to all you young people who have found the sense and good reason to leave your old lifestyles behind and start anew! We are so honored to know you and we hope you never stop spreading your good words. See you all next week!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

Book Donor: Marisela Norte

Beat Supporters: The Beat Within gratefully acknowledges the generous support of funders of Pacific News Service's Youth Communications Programs – California Arts Council, California Wellness Foundation, Christensen Fund, Community Foundation of Silicon Valley, Community Technology Foundation of California, Compton Foundation, Creative Work Fund, Cricket Island Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Ford Foundation, James Irvine Foundation, Marguerite Casey Foundation, Marin Community Foundation, Morris Stulsaf Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth, Open Society Institute, Peninsula Community Foundation, Philanthropic Ventures Foundation, S. H. Cowell Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Foundation, Shinnyoen Foundation, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation, Stone Circles Foundation, Stuart Foundation, Surdna Foundation, The California Endowment, Tides Foundation, Van Loben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation, Vanguard Public Foundation, Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, Walter S. Johnson Foundation, Youth Justice Funding Collaborative, the Zellerbach Family Fund and individual donors.

Writers: Thanks to all the participants in our workshops in the San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and Log Cabin Ranch School and the Walden House Facility, Maricopa County, Arizona, Walden House, Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, EPA Charter, RAP High School, Alameda County, Santa Cruz County and Marin County Juvenile Halls. As well as Natural Bridge in Virginia, and Hidden TREWTH in Rhode Island. If you have any questions or comments about The Beat Within, or if you would like to become a subscriber, contact us at: 275 Ninth St. SF.CA. 94103 or call (415) 503-4170 or check us out at

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The Worse Teacher I've Had

The worst teacher I had so far, was the street! I mean, I always thought that the streets would give me all that I needed — money, fame, respect, women. But I was hell wrong.

On the streets, you can't find your inner-self, 'cause people always sugar-coatin' everything. On the streets, won't provide a future job fo' you but always being on them streets, stuck like Chuck, looking and searching fo' the next buck. The streets won't be able to give you yo' high school diploma. Man ... the streets just ain't it!

Think about it: if you want to make it in life legit, the streets won't be able to do it fo' you. You have to be your own best teacher and do what's right fo' you — by yourself if you don't have help! We all have to step our game up and stop thinking that the streets can provide fo' us. I mean it might at the (present) moment, but look out fo' your future, 'cause you don't want to have to be on them streets to provide fo' ya fam'! You should want to live legit.

So, to cut it short, let's each "go smart" instead of "go dumb" — and be our own best teacher fo' our future and for our future kids!

-Drew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a golden piece, if gold represents metaphorically the highest value we can conceive, because this is the most valuable lesson you or we or anyone else can teach in the pages of The Beat. Some truths are just plain hard, like the one you've gained locked behind bars, not only do you have to be your own best teacher, but you have to do it all by yourself if there's no one else in your life to help. However, once you're on that road, you'll be surprised how many former strangers will step up from time to time to help lighten your load and keep you moving on down the line toward that degree, that j-o-b and that legal life with security and wealth for your future wife, future kids and your future self.

I feel I misguided my younger
siblings to the fullest! I
always put fun on the
streets and doing all kinds
of the wrong things before
my younger fam'.

Up From the Depths

One thing I regret doing in my life, is lying to girls that cared about me. I broke some girls' hearts before, when I said I loved them.

I mean, I did love them for a minute, but I learned the hard way when I left them that I didn't know what the word really meant. I used the word love as a cover-up. I just wanted attention and all of the above. As time went on, I didn't want to stay attached to the person. As I grew older, I figured what the word meant and that I had disobeyed its commandments. And I knew what I was saying was wrong and that I didn't mean what I said.

I know now that I shouldn't say it unless I mean it. The way I learned, was looking at people I hurt when I said it. I realized I was blowing smoke in their face when I said it. Now that I've settled down and use the word often for only one person, even though I'm locked up, when I say the word, I mean it — even if I'm not there to put a smile on her face.

The one person I love and will always say it to, is the one that picks me up from the gloomy depths of my wild mind.

-Reeseis Buttercup, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've done a lot of maturing. And yes, if those to whom you kept saying the word love, kept being left in pain when you refused to accept the responsibility that comes with true love, you do have an opportunity to learn from their pain that what you were doing was wrong. Of course, some never learn that lesson, and when true love comes their way, they blow it. We're glad you learned your lesson and you know it. Maybe that's the most important step in taming your wild mind, at least enough to stop having to do time.

Untold Story

growing up in life "to have"
was a verb used to its lowest standards
growing up off of what we could make do of
and never up close seen a silver platter
to be happy was hard for me to be
keep my head low so what others had that i could never
was from my eyes to see
sometimes i gave up and turned back on the world and life
but started to grow to see
that it was all worth the struggle
those excruciating days and nights
i have grown to see
the man it has made me to be
and proved most wrong who'd say
an apple doesn't fall far from the tree
never again shall i turn my back on life
but instead i face it head on
and put up the life-long fight
to say "give up" is easy to say
but i will contradict myself
and make to even brighter days
i have come to realize
that life is not over when you lose
it's only over when you quit
so i stand tall of it all
and leave the rest to sit
the life i live and life i have come to see
there is no worry
steps at a time and pieces
of my untold story

-Lil' Jamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: All these phrases like "never quit" are more tools than truths. Lost in the illusion that a life of doing wrongs requires only that one stay strong and never quit, the tool bends and the truth twists. Don't quit on yourself doesn't mean to keep chasing wealth by a life of crime, 'cause that will just have you dead or doing more time. It means to dive deep into your heart till you reach the place where your love starts, and then to cleanse your mind — leave the past behind and enter into a future you never thought could be real: a Lil' Jamar who refuses to rob, slang or steal. That's worth double the struggle in the end, 'cause that's how you finally can win.

Misguided

Misguided — damn! This topic is on the nose right here. I feel I misguided my younger siblings to the fullest! I always put fun on the streets and doing all kinds of the wrong things before my younger fam'.

When they used to ask me could they go with me, especially my little brother, I would always say, "No!" But somehow they still looked up to me. They loved to see me play basketball and do back and front flips off the big-screen TV onto the bed or couch! They loved to see me do tricks with fire and all sorts of things. They loved me, but I was so blinded by the streets that I was so stupid I couldn't even recognize the love that stood befo' me, lookin' up to me and all the things I did.

I'm hurt now, not 'cause I'm in jail, but 'cause I didn't set a better an more positive example fo' my younger siblings — and coming to jail didn't better it in any way. In fact, it made it worse! But when they visit me in YA, I will have long talks with them and let them know that they could be better than me!

-Drew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We believe they can do better than you did, but given who you are now, we don't believe they can be better than you — 'cause you have become one good man. Being who you now are, you can guide them away from the mistakes you made. They'll still make their own choices, but they will have a more mature voice to help open their eyes to other choices in life.

Me

I wanna do what's best
But it feels like I'm less
Yes, I'ma confess
I've done stupid stuff
Made real bad decisions
But I'ma turn things around
Keep my head up and my feet on the ground
I'ma figure out a master plan and go from there
Not think on all that negativity
And finish my productivity
Finish school and be cool
Stop all this stressin', start all this confessin'
And tell who I know won't tell
I'm go into detail
Had the abortion
And my baby poppa in and out of jail
In school big bolded "F"
Meaning you've failed
These are some of the struggles I've been through
I was a mad little girl
But not at me, at you
As my "dad"
You were never really there
The one I didn't have
But I'm not mad
I was wanting things I never had
As for my moms
I just want you to hang in there
And be strong
Even though all the hell we've been through
I will love you and always will
To handle my issues I won't pop a pill
'Cause I'm bigger and better than that
to let you know that shhh is wack
but like I said...
I'ma turn things around
And keep my head up and my feet on the ground

-Hyphy, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You got a whole lot into this fine poem, Hyphy. Even if you got an F in school, you're very far from a failure. The fact that you are putting so much effort into your own recovery, and that you are determined to achieve a bright future tells us that you are and will be a success. We think having an abortion, which must have been a terribly difficult decision for you, showed a lot of maturity on your part, especially if the baby's daddy is so irresponsible that he allows himself to go in and out of jail instead of thinking of you and the family he might have had. Don't give up on yourself, Hyphy. Your on a path toward becoming the responsible and mature young woman who writes us every week.

Regretting What I Did To My Victim

Although I regret many things in my troubled life, one main regret that I, Big B, have is hurting the victim in the way that I did. The victim didn't deserve what I did to him. I feel so much remorse and regret for having done what I did.

Like I said before even though anyone doesn't believe me here in juvenile hall, I feel that I can change my life for the better and YGC has been an out-of-body experience, a chance to reflect and review my past life and start new and fresh. Being caught for what I did was definitely at the right time and I do see it more clearly, my life definitely has a purpose and God definitely — DEFINITELY — does have a big plans for me. All I have to do is listen and keep praying.

To everyone detained in the juvenile system keep your heads up, way up. I get out March 16 to a group home, you heard me!

-Big B B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It doesn't really matter if anyone in the hall believes you or not Big B, all that matters is if you believe in yourself. (By the way, we do believe you.) You won't be here to see that you got Piece Of the Week, but we feel confident that each week you put in will be another step away from any further victimization — and another step towards a productive, decent life. (We sure wish we could have heard you play the violin...)

I Have Come To

what does it come to
when you realize you're alone
when you face the world
or has it been this way all along
not realizing
but stupidly have connived
what has it come to
but i still fail to realize
i feel as if my days
have been counted and numbered
and hiding all from me
and me left deep down under
what does a person think
when you realize you're alone
what is there to do
and people you loved
go away after so long
how will i act
in a way to feel enraged
no one there for me
i'm left to watch myself age
in a world of my own
i wonder is there such a thing
as right or wrong
with nothing left to look at
and have no place to call home
what does it come to
when you finally realize you're alone
with no one to run to
and left to live life on your own
do i sit
how could it be this way
what has a single man done
to curl in the dark with a look
of shame on his face
how could it be
that has brought doubt in me
who think it's gonna change me
i have no one to ask that question
so it's always gonna be the same to me
it's a time to reveal and come to truth
now with nothing what am i to do
what has happened to make it come to
what it has come to

-Lil' Jamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's time to start anew. Take that deep, hard look inside you and come to a new consciousness of what it is to be blessed — 'cause it wasn't that same old mess that you brought you this loneliness. Stripped down to nothing left to lose, you can, if you find the courage, at last choose to make that move that once was totally unimaginable to you. You never imagined this day or what you have come to — so left on your own all alone realize your freedom anew. It's all up to you.

when you realize
you're alone
what is there to do
and people you loved
go away after so long

My Life

I arrived here at Marin County Juvenile Hall
For committing a crime and breaking a law
The judge sentenced me for 365 days (one year)
And almost nine months later, here I still stay
I haven't had a steak or a woman's lips against mine
Out of these walls I want to break, but I gotta do my time
I raped a human being and my lover for two years
In her eyes, I used to see passion; now I only see fear
As my readers well know, I regret what I've done
And as much as I'd like to take it back, the deed has been done

I'm not angry at the world, just at myself
I realized I'm "sick" and I'm getting professional help
I don't want her forgiveness; I just want to go away
Away from reality and the familiar places I stay
I want to drop drugs and numb myself from reality
Because ever since that morning, I've had a sex-offender mentality
The incidents on my mind and thoughts are heartbreaking
But I'm slowly starting toward recovery from the steps I'm taking

I've decided to sit down and spit some real shhh
So I suggest you slow down, 'less you miss it
When I was a kid, I was a victim of neglectful parents
They gave me what they thought I needed, so as to better their appearance
I went through life angry at a subconscious person
Someone who was the target of my rage and cursin'
Someone who did me wrong by not being there at all
And when I got old enough, I realized that person was moms
Now I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this subject
But let's just clarify that she was the source of my conflict
While I was dealing with her leaving and then coming back
I got angry and flashed at the drop of a hat
I was not the kind of person you bring home to show daddy
If you looked at me the wrong way, you'd get the shhh kicked out of you

I would, what my friends later call, snap
Blunt rage, arms flying, and eyes rolled back
I lived with that anger for a good ten years
Attributing my anger to unworthy friends and fears
I became a mini-Hitler, without prejudice of henchman
And lashed out at loved ones; damn, I loved attention
Not to mention my step-dad, who could begin to control me
And he has never trusted me as far as he could throw me
And he did, against the wall, and at the kitchen sink
Wherever there was room, my fears would become his drink
He told me he forgot more shhh than I'll ever know
And while the abuse continued, disobedience would grow
It got to the point where he knew I would hit back
Never got hit again; he was smart like that
But old habits die hard, and he still threw things
Whether it be blocks of wood, and forks, or even wedding rings

But his aim was poor, and I kept evading
All his projectiles, so he took to intimidating
Getting all up in my face, and trying to stare me down
Giving me the evil eye, but never making a sound
I eventually walked out the house, and never came back
Left him standing there, looking like he cracked
He thought I'd be back, as soon as it got dark
But I was long gone; Elvis had left the park
I had nowhere to go, and no food to be found
You could find me picking up refries off the ground
I stole a sleeping bag and slept in the dumpster
When I woke up, most mornings I looked like a monster
I stayed with my girlfriend 'til she broke my heart
I spoke about that in the beginning, but being broke is what started it

I was lost in a state of loneliness and bums
Wet were my eyes and bleeding were my gums
I lost job after job to my rage and emotion
I went through my life high; I was floatin'
Totin' knives for my safety (thank God I never had to use 'em)
Friends would come to my aid, but all I did was abuse 'em
Here is where I'll lapse back into specifics
To the nitty gritty and unmentionable explicit
Back in time, to the days where I didn't give a shhh
Where I'd get what I wanted, or else I'd throw a fit
I was on tranquilizers; oh, boy, what a trip!
I loved and hated life; I was confused and I kinda miss it
But that part of my life is over and done
Scraped under the table—an unwanted piece of gum
I was in touch with friends, but none of them cared
Now that I mention it, though, they might have been scared
I was talking crazy; borderline schizophrenic
Arguing with myself, even punching myself in the stomach
I've never told this part of my life to anybody
But I guess it's time I get this out of my body
I think the drugs altered my state of mind
I'm talking about prescription, not the fun kind
I started having thoughts that involved violence
And in the back of my mind, it was saying, "Try this"
And up to this day, my emotions aren't steady
The ups and downs and breakdowns were many
Just today I had a sudden urge to kill
And then I wanted nothing more to be back on pills
But don't worry; I've learned to control what I do
I've stopped being stupid and actin' a foo'
Please forgive me for interrupting, but it's driving me insane
But these pounding mothers are invading my brain
See, I've learned from my step-dad not to get mad
And develop a skill that many wish they had
He told me I was stupid, brainless, and dumb
And to get used to straightjackets, 'cause "they" will come
But I hate him so much; I get off on proving him wrong
I read and I learned; my anger held for so long
I have the ability to write incredible poetry
And I forced his inhibitions to loosen and let go of me
I broke free of the chains that once held me down
And my vast knowledge of stuff will bring him down
Right now my mind and anger are at peace
All the confusion of life's problems have ceased
I am completely content with my pen in my hand
Though a child when I was booked, I am now a man
Eighteen years old, in a juvenile hall cell
This is heaven compared to freedom's hell
I get room and board and a PS2 to play
I'm here for a year and at \$15 a day
I am a writer and an artist, and a good friend
Though nice, sometimes the rules I bend
I used to be a child myself, playing in the mud
And remember white, black, yellow or red; we bleed the same blood

I'm overcoming the fact that I was abused as a child
And as I slowly get older, I get a little bit wild
I am in the prime of my life and locked up, for God's sake
Life sucks, but it's all a game of give and take
I used to be suicidal; well, actually, earlier today
But unlike most people, I didn't sit down and pray
I drew my emotions like I was God or something
Expressing my feelings instead of thoughts of jumping
When I make my first million and I know that I will
I'm going to find the man who raised me, who gave me nil
Sock him in the face as an exclamation point
And then roll up a 20 and make him smoke it like a joint
Because I will be the victor; he has no control over me
I do what I do and that's all that I see
Now I won't like; I've had some serious inspiration

continued on next page

And a lot of time to think with all this time that I'm facing
I've realized that after all this, I've become a better person
And where the fear once was, happiness is lurking
I'd like to give a shout out to one person, though
In particular, she was the one who gave me room to grow
That person was my lover for two years
The same one who looks at me and gets scared
She has taught me more in the time we were together
Than all my life, walking around in a hateful sweater
She is an angel, whether she knows it or not
And she'll never imagine the amount of love for her I got
As much as she doesn't believe it, and she has a right not to
I love her and she's still the only one I can talk to
I've told her things that used to eat me up inside
And she never showed disgust, just took it in stride
One of the incredible things about her is that she is loyal
And if you give her the simple things, life will be royal
I learned and saw a side of her that no man should see
A side of hurt and despair and it shows in the blood she
bleeds

We had something special and I messed it up
I broke her heart, her trust, and I messed it up
My eyes are twisted into congealed blobs of sorrow
Strained to cry and not wanting to see tomorrow
This life I lead is one that has failed
One that's opened Pandora's box and transformed earth into
hell

God, I hate the fact that that beautiful woman cried
When she looked at me scared, something inside of me died
In every woman's smile, I see her tears run down her face
In every woman's touch, I feel the innocence I've wasted
It's messed up what I did, and, yes, I am raging
I'm kinda glad that I'm locked up in this cage
I'm thinking through clenched teeth; every day is the
same

And no matter what I feel, her pain doesn't go away
This feeling, "I'm disgusting," will haunt me forever
Until I erase what has happened, which will be never
My emotions are dark and slow moving, like blood
And they don't even out smoothly, like emotions should
You can call me deranged or you can say that I'm normal
But I get sick to my stomach when my thoughts turn
carnal

I need to cry to express my feelings
They're brimming over the top; my brain is peeling
I'm afraid if I stop writing, I'll do something stupid
This is my do-bad and this is my do-good
This is raw and uncut, feelings are boiling
I ruined a life like an apple spoiling
Whispering unintelligible phrases to invisible ears and
heads

My voice fills an empty cell like molten lead
The walls answer back with uncanny duplication
Reverberating anger into walls adjacent
I am trying my hardest to stop this shaking
It's scaring me—the non-words I'm making
I'm writing and speaking and my energy drains
My anger subsides and unclenches my brains
I've overcome an attack of mental issues

And I, yet again, have no use for tissue
I say again, raw emotion in its purest form
I had no idea what I was starting when I started this poem
I am depleted and shhh, here comes the yawn
It's only twelve o'clock, but it feels like dawn
I feel like I'm ready to go to bed
But I can still hear the cries of "stop" through my head
I feel sick to your stomach, thinking of what I did
And I am so happy I chose not to have her kid
Well, Beat, that was one experience I'll never forget
And I hope you realize that's as real as you're ever gonna get
From tearless sobs to talking to the air
Writing to you feels like someone cares
I think, Beat, that you might of just saved my life
I had fleeting images of anguish and strife
And now comes the part that's known as the end
Because I feel safe putting down my pen
Thank you

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: The real joy of writing can be letting the stuff inside you just pour out uncensored and unedited, Scorpion. It can amaze you, like you write this poem has, what's going on within you that you may have only had clues about. Writing can be like purging all the sadness, confusions, unfelt joy, fury, madness, that gets all clogged up in your psyche. If writing for The Beat helps you see yourself, and give you the distance of another perspective about your situation, it's all good. We get to wander through your mind, as you do, and appreciate what up in there and to top it off learn from you. Does it mess with you that your mom and step-dad could be in your life now, especially when you could really use a stable home and a family who loves and cares about you, but they still aren't there for you? Your pain must seem like an open wound that can't heal. Are you able to set up an alternative home and family for yourself, when you're free again? We hope so. Tell us your thoughts.

You Can't Blame Them

Yes, it's true people have control over their own lives. It's true people can change at any given time into a completely different good person. And it's also true that when you tell them they act like they don't care, and they don't. They seriously don't care and are willing to risk their lives continuously and daily over a different group of people or for some money or to show they "down".

But you can't blame them. That's what they mean most strong about. That's what their whole life is. That's how they grew up and that's what they need to do to be respected or to get money. That's what their whole lives revolve around. You can't just lock them up for a long time with a brief explanation of why it's wrong and expect them to be a whole new person who does everything right. This does work for some people, but everyone is different.

Most of these people that are successful are smart. They have a sense of what's good and bad. I'm sorry to say, but some people just aren't as bright. But it's not their fault that they grew up the way they did, growing up with NO ONE to tell them right from wrong. So they grow up thinking what they do is okay. They know they can get in trouble for it, but they don't know police stand for good. How can you blame people who don't believe that police and laws are for good if the same police officers beat them and tell them they are worthless pieces of shhh? The police are straight losers

-Game Tight B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Great piece of work. It's a shame you didn't sign it so we don't know who's getting a Piece Of the Week... Since we don't have a name, we've decided to call you Game Tight because that's what this writing tells us about you. Some people do have control over their lives, and maybe they have better brains than those who don't seem to have control over their lives. But it might not be brains all the time; some just won't or can't exercise self-control and will power. In both cases, though, you are right to say that people who are brought up in a certain environment where everyone (or nearly everyone) is doing things a certain way, that becomes their "normal," and it is unfair to blame them for acting "normal." At the same time, the system DOES blame them, so unfair or not, those people have to come up with a new "normal" for themselves, or they will be paying the heavy price of lost freedom. There are all types of people that do all sorts of things for the own reason, so we're curious to know where you fit in. Did you lose control and end up here? Knowing all that you know, why are you sitting in a trap that you already knew was set up for your downfall?

You can't just lock them up for a long time with a brief explanation of why it's wrong and expect them to be a whole new person who does everything right.

Love Radiates From Her

What's up Beat? This topic I'm writing about today is what is the difference between the love I got from my father and that of my mother. It comes as a recommendation from one of The Beat's best employees, because I have written on the topic of parents' love often in the last month. I'll start off with my mom. She is most definitely the grease that keeps the wheel that is my family turning smoothly. She is the strongest woman I know, and probably the smallest too.

Love just radiates from her, she has the most upbeat and positive personality. Every time I see her there is a permanent smile on her face, and no matter what mood I'm in I have to return the smile, and it always brightens my day. She is one of the people who look at the glass half full. She can always find the brighter side of things. The love that she has for me and my brother is like a pitbull with her puppies. She wants the best for us and she would do anything to keep us safe. But when I messed up she would be disappointed, not necessarily mad. And she would always forgive me. Her love is omnipresent even when she isn't.

Now my father is just about the complete opposite where my mom kept everything going smooth, he was the bump in the road that shook everyone up and made the ride exciting. My father was a very strong part of my family life, especially mine. To me he was the railroad track and I was the train. Whatever he wanted me to do I did, wherever he wanted me to go, I went. I loved my dad a lot, as you know if you've read any of my previous pieces.

Where my mom didn't want me doing anything bad, but my dad knew that boys will be boys. For example the first joint, I ever smoked was tailored by my dad. That wasn't the only thing, he looked at the glass as half empty. I mean he had his moments where he looked at the brighter side, but they were few and far between. However, he did have all the right in the world to be bitter.

The love my father had was like an older brother, he wanted me to be tough and experience what I wanted but if things got out of hand he would step in with no concern for himself.

-Shotgun, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Shotgun, your writing gets better and better each week, especially with all these metaphors and sharp descriptions. What a loving portrait of your mother, you made us see her and admire her too, even though we've never met her. We also thought it was interesting what you say about your father - that he was more like a brother than a father. Do you think things would have been different for you, growing up, if he'd been more of a "father figure" in your life?

Regrets Over Time Lost With My Dad

I regret most all not speaking to my dad when I had all the chances in the world. I had been pissed at him for a long time for no reason at all just because I don't want to do anything he said, just wanted to do things my way and ended up learning later he was right.

Unfortunately, it's too late to tell him he was right because he passed away in a car accident in October 2005, about six months ago. I regret not spending time with him when I had the chances to. One thing I will carry on at least for the rest of my life is that he was right and I can never forget that, which is probably what he wanted.

-Nick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for this piercing and honest piece. It takes courage and heart to write about the things that are really happening in our lives, not just in The Beat but for everyone. But remember, every fight you had with your dad came from his unconditional love, even if it sounded as if he might have said it in a way that sounded like a rule or a lecture. He was trying to keep you safe, because you were his little boy, and he knew keeping you safe was his job. Try to remember that when you feel regrets about your past fights, that's not what he cared about. What he cared about was your happiness, your security, the kind of man he wants you to be. So yes, you can never forget that, but not to feel bad. Don't forget it so you remember to live a life that would let him know he's done his job!

Me Arrepiento Haber Hecho Mal

Yo he hecho muchas cosas pero hay una que más me arrepiento haber hecho. Me separe de mi madre y también de mi hermanos y también vendi drogas. Eso es una de las cosas que más me arrepiento haber hecho. Yo no sabía como era la cárcel. Como mire que los demás vendían drogas yo también hice lo mismo y ahora estoy aquí. Ya no volveré a hacer porque ya sé que estar en la cárcel es muy triste, no solo por esa razón sino porque uno también pelagra la vida.

Yo no entiendo porque algunas personas que caen preso y salen no dejan de hacer las cosas malas.

Ya hay unos que han caído varias veces y por lo mismo, por vender las malditas drogas. Ya es la primero vez que lo hago y que estoy aquí. Me arrepiento no solo por haber caído preso sino porque yo sé que es cosa mala. Apresar que yo sabía que era malo, no dejaba de hacerlo hasta que caí preso.

Yo me pongo a pensar que si hubiera caído preso no hubiera dejado de hacer las cosas que yo estaba haciendo. Ahora que estoy aquí, ya no pienso volver a lo mismo.

Yo estoy muy triste porque ya no puedo encontrar mi libertad. Cuando salga yo no pienso volver a lo mismo porque ahora que pienso que todo el dinero de las drogas no me podrá ser feliz.

From The Beat: Bueno que bien que te has arrepentido de haber hecho estas cosas. La verdad que las drogas son malas. Las drogas son causas por las cuales mucha gente se estan destruyendo o han perdido sus vidas. Al vender drogas no solo te estas arriesgando tu vida y tu libertad sino que también estas cooperando con la destrucción de las personas. Esperamos que cuando salga no te pase a los que le ha pasado a muchos que dicen que no van a regresar y regresan.

I Regret Having Done Bad

I have done a lot of things, but there's one that I regret having done above everything else. I separated myself from my mother and also from my brothers and I also sold drugs. That is one of the things that I most regret ever having done. I did not know jail was like. Just like how I saw the rest selling drugs, I also did the same and now I am in here. I will never do this again because now I know that being in jail is very sad, not just because of that reason, but because one puts his/her life in danger.

I don't understand why some people that get locked up and get out don't stop doing bad things.

There are some that have gotten locked up many times and for the same thing: For selling those damn drugs. That was the first time I did it and for what? I am in here. I regret doing it not just because I got locked up, but because I know doing that is a bad thing. Even though I know selling drugs was bad, I didn't stop doing it until I got locked up.

I start to think that if I had not gotten locked up, I would not have stopped doing the things that I was doing. Now that I am in here, I'm not thinking about doing the same thing.

I am very sad because I can no longer find my freedom. When I get out of here, I don't plan on going back to doing the same things because now that I think about it, all the money that I make from drugs wouldn't be able to make me happy.

-Rene B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well, that's very good that you regret having done these things. The truth is, drugs are very bad. Drugs are the reason why so many people are destroying themselves or have lost their lives. By selling drugs, not only are you putting your life at risk and your freedom, but you're also aiding in the destruction of those very same people. We hope that when you get out, what has happened to many people who say they are not going to come back but do, does not happen to you.

Regret Gang Life

One thing I regret doing in my life is joining a gang. It's something that started out as revenge.

It all started when I was ten years old one of my older brothers got shot while we were sitting in his car parked in Redwood City. He died in front of me. His blood, my own brother's blood, was on my clothing and soaking in his shirt. Ever since then I feel like my life has just been a struggle. All the dreams and nightmares I have I just can't escape what happened no matter how hard I try. So the best thing I could do is start gangbanging. So I started doing drugs then from that the dirt had to be done and I did so much I don't have to lift a finger anymore.

But I regret all the things I did 'cause now I have even more nightmares and I'm going to jail just 'cause I can't stop doing what I'm used to doing.

To all who are doing what I used to do, I say this to you: if you have time to change your life do it 'cause if you don't know what you're doing the streets are gonna eat you alive.

-Smokey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing the wise words of a teacher, a young man who's been down the rough road and knows it's no place for the younger men, any man. But we must point out a small error in your words and that's to advise guys who "don't know what they're doing" to step away. What we see is a lot of frontin' by guys who convince themselves they DO know what they're doing and that that is protection. Because there is no protection from the mean streets, you can only buy time. If you don't get killed, then you'll lose your heart by watching all your homies get killed or hauled away for life. So keep speaking up, but remember that the wisest thing is to admit the limitations of wisdom.

if you have time to change your
life do it 'cause if you don't know
what you're doing the streets are
gonna eat you alive.

RIP My Lil' Carnalito

My carnalito died in my arms on the street outside my homeboy's house, he was shot in the back of the head by a bullet meant for someone else. His blood ran through my fingers as I held him like I did when he was just a baby. He was just an innocent kid who never hurt anyone, never stole anything, never got in any fights, not like me. I wasn't always nice to him, but I was still his favorite person. Usually I chased him away when I was with my friends. I did that the day he was shot.

He was on his way home when the shooter came down to the barrio, my carnalito was so brave, he tried to warn me, I know he was scared. I could see it in his eyes and I tried to protect him but I was too late.

My carnalito would still be alive if he didn't follow me that afternoon. Wish I could replay that whole day because I would do it differently, but I can't. On that summer day, my carnalito died trying to protect me.

Though he was just eight years old. He is the biggest hero I know. And now he's gone because of me. There are no other heroes in my life. RIP Lil' Guerito, Magic, Traviesa, Pelon, Cobra, Mr. Los, and Mr. Cyco. Alratos homies, I'll make you proud.

-Diabolito, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a moving, heartbreaking, incredibly powerful piece. And you're right, the death of this beautiful boy will always be your responsibility. Not your fault, that's not what we mean - but your responsibility. You know, better than any of us, the cost of your lifestyle. You've literally held it in your arms. We know you've talked about how hard it is to leave "the life" before. But it is not life, is it? It's death. Honor your carnalito, honor his love for you, honor his life, honor the meaning behind it: Get out of the vicious cycle you're in, walk away from it - build the life you deserve, and that you and the homies up above can be proud of. Peace and respect.

Misguided

There was once a little vato
Raised by wolves in a town
Of the misguided and misunderstood
See, who would have known

The evil and deceit
This lil' vato was exposed
To at a tender age
Through early years
He earned stripes
And stayed loyal to
His peeps

One thing he often wondered
Is why is it that
His peers are often
Sitting down in here?

Could it be that we
Were misguided and deceived?
So being misunderstood
Is being what it seems
But nevertheless

He kept his head up high
And did all the tiempo
The DA had to offer

There is a release
For the fourth time
But in sets the cycle
Of alcohol and drug induced trances

Yes you can say
He never learned his lesson
Shhh go down in the hood
Some vato gets handled
This vato said this
This vato said that
And wouldn't you guess
For this lil' vato, it's a wrap
So many questions
But never any answers
Stuck to this cell

Facing life, for the name being slandered

-Shorty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's been pretty incredible watching your talents and skills grow over all this time that you've been writing in The Beat. You often wrote stories that sounded like poems, and here for the first time you write a poem - and of course it tells a story. It also asks a question, one which we know from your reading list and from all your other pieces, has been plaguing you for a while: "Why is it that his peers are often sitting down in here?" You tell us, why is it? How could so many bright young talents and brave hearts be so misguided? Have you begun to answer this question for yourself?



The Real Scorpion

My name is Dominic and I am eighteen years old. I am an artist and a poet. Why I am locked up isn't important. I live off the Atherton exit in Novato, in a trailer park. I used to go to school at Braun High School, until I dropped out. I am Italian, but I don't speak it (though I want to learn.)

I love to drink alcohol. My preference is straight vodka. I smoke Marlboro reds. I have brown and dark green eyes. People say my eyes and lips are the best part about my face. I am extremely easy to get along with, but I am kind of shy around girls. I have more girlfriends than I do guy friends, though, because I don't approach looking for a lover. I enjoy reading, writing, and am a great listener, though I can tell stories for hours if asked. I used to play baseball for four years, when I was younger.

I'm shorter than most. I have lived in Novato, California, for the past eight years. I am a heterosexual male. I have had many Beat names, such as: Peeper, Sick and Twisted, Orange, Bubbles, but I mainly use Scorpion, because I am proud of being a stubborn Scorpio. Well, if you ever see me on the street, we can kick it. I hope you like the real Scorpion. Peace.

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: We do like the real Scorpion, especially your great sense of humor, modesty, honesty and trust in yourself and innate goodness of the world. It's fun to read how you assess yourself. You are easy to get along with and you tell amazing, imaginative stories that come from your huge sense of fantasy. What's it like to be you and watch yourself go through the whole gamut of emotions, aesthetics, points of view, as rapidly and profoundly as you can and do? Now tell us what about you must you improve on/change?

To The Ladies

Ladies and gentlemen, well, actually, just the ladies
I want you to know how much I appreciate you making babies
I can't imagine the pain that childbirth brings
So much agony for one man's "one-night fling"
Women are beautiful and I appreciate your actions
The way you look at us from across the room, gives us
satisfaction

It makes us feel good to know that we are wanted
And, girls, if you know you have it, go ahead and flaunt it
Us guys put you through a lot and we don't always make you
smile

So, ladies, take ten minutes today and enjoy being appreciated
for a while

I don't know about all men, but Scorpion thinks you're special
I want you to know that God has really blessed y'all

It makes me sad that some of us take you as objects to use
And out and about, and even in bed, you suffer from abuse
On behalf of all the men who've wronged you, I'll think they'll
agree

That you have the right to be well treated; I hope you'll accept
our apology

You cook, clean, and pleasure us, and what do we give back?

We put you on the street, selling yourselves for crack

My sex is male, but I appreciate the ladies

And I hope you agree with me...maybe?

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: What a beautiful poem and paean to the ladies. But do you also think young women can or do get as well as give, the good and the bad? Do you think women can and/or do appreciate and/or abuse men? How, in your estimation, could women maintain their dignity, integrity and independence, and still have wholesome relationships with men?

I used to go to school at Braun High School, until
I dropped out. I am Italian, but I don't speak it
(though I want to learn.)

Feeling Misguided

Do you ever feel misguided
Don't know where you lost your direction
And still trying to find it
Lost in the world running into obstacles
Like playing tag in the park after dark
Blinded by what you want to see
But unable to see what could be
Living your life in between two bucks
Out on the corner selling rocks
Never knowing your possibilities
Never sailing the seven seas
Being condemned in your own jets
Keepin' yourself on a short leash like a pet
I feel for those who will never see the world
Stuck in one place like a jacked up Jeri Curl
But when you get stuck on hop feeling like a bunny
Look back to when you lost your direction
Now damn, don't you feel corny

-Timmet B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We can tell that you have big desires to see the world, to get a different perspective from the narrow view we all get in our own little worlds. We admire that quality very much, and we think it's the very thing that will pull you out of this juvenile justice hole that you're in. Yes, we too feel sorry for those who never get to see what they're capable of, and what the world beyond theirs offers. So it always thrills us when we find a young man who is curious about things outside his life — and who is committed to making the changes he needs to make in order to discover that world. When you get out of here, stay out of here and explore!

The Beat Within

The Beat Within is my only friend
The only one who doesn't talk, but listens
The one and only Beat is my only reason
That I'm only serving four more months this season
When I'm goin' home and dronin' on
About how my life was in this corny home
The Beat Within will still be goin' on
And encouraging others to stay home and get goin'
I favor The Beat over any other mag
In its pages, the homies hardly ever brag
Real shhh, as opposed to red and blue flags
I really don't get the point of that
But it's a bonafide war, but I'm not trippin'
I'd rather be in here than with the cats that be slippin'
Gettin' locked up instead of gas brake dippin'
But I'm not here to talk, so you don't have to listen
I grew up rich, but moved into a broken home
I can attest you appreciate it more when it's gone
I'll hopefully remember that when I'm old, gray and grown
So I'll have admirers instead of dying cold and alone

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: You should definitely consider The Beat Within your good friend, Scorpion. We totally appreciate all the wonderful poems, raps, short stories, vignettes, letters, fantasy trips, humor, the random selections from your voracious mind you've contributed to The Beat since last July, when you became incarcerated. If we've helped you make it through the long nights you've spent alone writing in your room, it's all good, because that's what we're here for.

Regret Not Changing

One thing I regret is being the same person that I was when I first came to YGC. I was supposed to learn from my mistakes and not end up here, but made the same mistakes and ended back here in YGC in B2. I am not saying I regret being me, I'm saying I regret the stupid decisions I made knowing that those decisions I made will lead me being locked up or dead.

But now it's time to grow up and quit the dumb shhh , you feel me?. What I'm going to do is take it day by day and not think about too much at one time. I also regret the time I spend in here because if you don't learn anything you're just wasting valuable life time because you're never going to get that time back on da one, and I'm gone.

-Joshua B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We like the way you approach this topic. Regretting bad decisions is the first step toward making good ones. We also appreciate the fact that you are taking one step at a time, and not trying to rewrite the entire book of your life in one chapter. It took time for you to get where you are. It will take time for you to move past where you are. But with your self-evaluation and clear thinking, we have great confidence that you can do it.

Thoughts of a Convict

it all seems too good to be true
could it all be an illusion
could i be suffering from
my pain and own wrong doings
i put my all into it
but one man alone couldn't save the world
and it's to every good man
speech to make all hear their word
it's too good to be true
and lowers my own dreams and self-esteem
the words run through my brain
but know not what they mean
it is my own self's doings
which give me grief
and my own backsliding
when struggling to find peace
it is my actions i follow
and when it's all said and done
makes me ashamed and naïve
beating my own self down
and leaving my wounds to bleed
i am short for words
and in a gasp for breath
taking even deeper falls
for every little step
once in debt for all
what is there to have left
mind in a trance
and in deep tears for regret
only way to see
but blind for words to say
with no "i can do" but to accept it
because i have no choice but to feel this way
could i be suffering from
my own self and own wrong doings
it's all too good to be true
just lost dreams and illusions

-Lil' Jamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is a paradox that when we accept responsibility for our own pain and wrong doing, the same force that fills us with shame dispels our illusions and the same force that hits our self-esteem is what sets us free — free from the prison we carry in our own minds, free from the "lost dreams and illusions" that had kept us blind to what's really true. Yes, we volunteered for so much of our suffering by the things we would continually choose to do. Too good to be true? No, 'cause all the work is still there for you to do, day in and day out. But put in the work and, "Hallelujah, I'm free!" you'll soon shout.

I Can't Say That I Do Regret

I can't say that I do regret anything I have done or anything that has happened to me in my past. I know if I didn't go through what I've been through I wouldn't be who I am today.

Today I love myself. Before, I didn't, and I always thought about how I wished things to be different. Now that I've accepted myself and my past I'm happy. Even though I'm not in a good position right now I know once I get out I will be a stronger person for having to put up with what I had to do.

Even though everything hasn't been the best I can't say that I regret it. I also have to remember if I never went through the bad parts the good parts wouldn't've been that much sweeter. I love my baby dressed in brown.

-Kristin GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What is responsible for this change of attitude? It could be something as simple as getting older because you definitely describe the child that you were from mind of the adult that you have become. We'd love to know what led you out of the darkness into the light because it could help some other lost youngster. We have faith that you can use your new insights to make sure this is your very last time in the hall.

Admitting My Sin

What's up Beat? I've wrote to the Beat like three or four times already. From San Francisco County to San Mateo County. My first time getting locked up was near Christmas of 2005, released a week after 2006 started. And got locked up again three weeks after my release.

The reason I was locked up the first time was because I was accused of an assault case. I didn't even do the crime and that is why I am fighting the case. The other reason I got locked up the second time was because of Grand Theft Auto. I took part in the crime so I'm doing the time for it. I got sentenced to Glenwood for that.

I am at YGC going to court still for the assault case. I just hope I win the case, because I don't want to do time for something I didn't do. I think it's good that I am in here because I am rehabilitating in here. My time is so far six months for camp. But I'm not worried because I just want to do my time and get out and be with my family again. I just noticed I really screwed up. Now I regret the stuff I ever done, and I'm finally going to do my time for it.

I just want to say, "If you don't want to do the time, than don't do the crime". I lost a two-year relationship with my girlfriend because of my stupidity. I totally regret everything. Now I'm going to turn 18 years old while being incarcerated. I really done it now. Peace out Beat.

-Rehabilitating Minor B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds like you have your head screwed on right, even though we're not sure why it took you losing your freedom to make it that way. Did you think you wouldn't get caught for the things you were doing, or that there would be no consequences if you did get caught? Or, did you just not think at all? Well, it's clear you're thinking now, and that's what counts. The fact that you now accept responsibility for the crime you did commit (while fighting the one you didn't) shows maturity on your part. What do you want to be doing in a year's time, or five year's time? How will achieve those goals?

Now that I've
accepted myself and
my past I'm happy.

Fighting My Addiction

Right now I'm not doing well at all. I've been having hella bad cravings to use. Okay, usually I think about it all the time, y'know, except for the past month. It's been in the back of my head, but now it's been all I think about for the past few days... constant, wanting to shoot up.

I can visualize it. In my mind's eye it's always there and I get so frickin' excited. I jump up and down in euphoria. And then I even feel like I'm on one. I'm freezing, whereas before I was always stuffy in houses. I get nauseous and think I'm hungry, but I can't eat. My face gets alternately flushed and pale. And it's not just that. Piled on top of that is my missing my friends... my life.

And then I talk to the therapist about why. Why did I continue to use when shhh would happen right in front of me to my friends? And why do I still want to use? Why isn't it getting through to me? At the same time, me wanting to continue what I was doing before I got caught up. I get frustrated because in here I've been doing so well for the past month, or at least it looks so, 'cept I've been thinking so much shhh...

I dunno... I guess the change is that there might be all this shhh in my head, but I'm not acting on it.

-Slug, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We admire your courage and honesty for laying this out so completely, Slug. We're sure that what you're going through is the common experience of those trying to kick an addiction. That's exactly what "addiction" means — your body is craving a chemical even more now than before because you're not giving into that craving. At this point, we hope you just have faith that it will get easier as time goes by. Of course, you will never be completely free of this burden, but as time goes on, you will have whole days where you won't give drugs a thought. We know it's hard to hold onto that promise now; that's why we ask you to have faith that it will happen, and not give into your urgings. Talking to your therapist (who has heard stories very much like yours before) is exactly the right thing to do. And so is writing about it, and not hiding those feelings. We think you're doing great, Slug, and we wish you nothing but good luck and strength in your ongoing and continuing battle.

I wish they handed
out patience as
county-snacks.

Patience

Tonight I don't feel like writing on any of the topics that were given. Instead I feel like writing about "patience."

I think I need a lot more patience. Sometimes I get so caught in the suffering of life, that I forget there's also coming of life as well. I loose patience and start to give up.

I run away from group homes, use drugs, get in fights, try to commit suicide, ruin great relationships with people, and other self-destructive things.

For instance, sometimes I forget that one day I will be off probation and free. I get so angry and discouraged to do good because of lack of patience that I act out. I wind up making things worse and staying on probation longer. I really need patience. I wish they handed out patience as county-snacks.

-Tiffany's Song, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What an insightful piece Tiffany. But also easier said than done, right? So we appreciate your efforts to put things into perspective. It is no easy task to be patient about living in a group home, when every moment feels excruciating. We wish there was a way to wave a magic wand and surround you with light rather than darkness, but we think you may have to find your own way to do that. Reflecting about what actions you can take, internal (like being patient) and external (like finding and pursuing something you really enjoy doing), is certainly the right way to go.

Was It Only The Drugs?

When you fall in love, you think it will last forever, then it doesn't

But we were also in love with the rush of the crank

We talked all night because we couldn't sleep

I laid there twitching in your arms and felt so safe

What happened?

Where did it all go?

Was it only the drugs?

You promised you would be there forever

Where did you go?

You left me all alone to fend for myself

How could you?

You would call me when you were crashing and tell me to buzz off

You said I messed up your whole life

I believed you...

Then you'd call me when you were done and apologize

I thought you meant it

I should have known you just wanted sex

You told me he was gonna kill you

So I got you the money

You lied and spent it on drugs

And then you didn't talk to me again

I was abandoned

]but I couldn't let you go

I still loved you and I always will

Yet, it's time to let you go

I need to move on

As you used to tell me, I may be a female

But I'm a strong female

A female who knows what she wants

A female who respects herself

And most importantly, a woman

A woman who doesn't need you any more

I am a strong, beautiful, independent woman!

-Lita, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: What we like most about this poem is your powerful ending! But what we like least about his poem is that you throw out the question, "Was it only the drugs," without ever trying to answer it. And from what we read, we think the answer is a very loud, "YES!" You say you felt safe in his arms while twitching and being unable to sleep, but that was only an illusion. As long as the two of you were using, you were never safe. He may have had genuine feelings for you, but his feelings for the crank were even more powerful. You cannot serve two masters, and he was (and probably still is) serving his drug master. You couldn't compete. The thing to focus on now is your own recovery and sobriety. You are so much better, so much stronger than he ever was. If you truly respect yourself, you will never allow another man to treat you this way again! (We took out the "B" word because we hate it and because you aren't it!)

Stay in School

The first mistake and the biggest mistake I ever made is that I gave up and stopped going to school,

because if I had stayed in school,

I would probably not even be in here.

If I had the sense to stay in school

most likely I would have had the sense to not break the law.

If I would of stayed in school, I would have been in school instead of being in the streets getting into trouble.

But I chose to be cool and I stopped going to school.

Then I started to rob and sell drugs to get money.

I started having money and ended up selling more drugs.

Then everything caught up to me and I ended up in here just because I chose not to go to school.

-Jarrod, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is a poem by Gwendolyn Brooks that goes: "We real cool. We Left school. We late. We Strike straight. We Sing sin. We Thin gin. We Jazz June. We Die soon." She talks about the life of some young people who are so cool they decide to leave school. What do you think about this poem? Do you see any connection between it and your life? How are you going to get back in school?

I Regret I Gave My Life To The Streets

Damn! I got a lot of things I regret about my life. I think the thing I regret the most is when I made the decision to give my life to the streets. When I made that decision, my life went completely astray. I began to not care about what happened to me. I was blastin', robbin' people, sellin' drugs, not givin' a damn. Now that I think about it, all that was coo' an' all for the lil' minute it lasted.

But karma is real, man, for real. You may get away with something at that moment. Eventually, it's gon' come back and bite you in the ass, whether it ends you up in jail or six feet under. I'm tellin' you, if your karma is bad, you're going to get bad karma in return and that's real, man. If you're reading this now, chances are your karma isn't that good. Sit back and think about your life, man, for real. One love. Gone.

-Young Guis B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you think giving your life to the streets is the decision of a child, while you now are looking through adult eyes? How will the adult you're becoming take your life back from the streets? If not the streets, what do you want to give your life to or for? What do you want in your future life? What's your plan for getting it?

Mis-guidance

What's up? This is Joker, residing in this max unit. First and foremost, I would like to extend my love and blessings to all doing time and going through some struggles. Now to this topic: Misguided.

I was misguided a lot when I was growing up in the 'hood. However, I don't blame no one but myself for being who I am. I don't deny choosing this life, and I don't regret it either. The one thing that does pain me, on the serio side, is that by being the vato that I am right now, has brought misery to my familia — and, in a way, has misled by lil' bro' Daniel aka Baby Joker. My carnal has always looked up to me, ever since I can remember; but instead of being a positive influence in his life, I have exposed him to the gangsta life that leads to no good, in the eyes of our Creator.

I have not been there to watch my lil' brother grow. But, on the other hand, being away from him means that he hasn't been following in my footsteps. He still wants to be like his big bro', but from behind these walls, I have been advising him to chase his own dreams and make my familia proud! Much love carnalito!

-Joker, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Major props to you for trying to exert a good influence on your brother through deeply felt words of advice. But you know, footsteps only get larger in the 'hood, large as myth, when you're on lockdown. We can't tell you how many have followed in the footsteps of an absent father or big brother, maybe 'cause of what they hear from those they see as OG's. For sure, tell him that there are better ways to go! But, since you mention the eyes of the Creator, why not show both your little brother and the Lord of love and forgiveness that it's never too late to chase a new dream. Man, you can make your familia proud yet! We're not saying you should punk out, but you can still pursue your education, get your degree and hold down a decent and legal j-o-b. Then match words to deeds and let Baby Joker see, all that big brother Joker can really be.

Something I Regret

Something I regret is not listening to my mom. That's something we all who are in this type of situation wish we had done. I'm learning the hard way like my mom and others said I would.

I regret making the stupid decision that caused me to be locked up again. I regret sending myself to what seems like my inheritable or inevitable fate. I regret allowing myself to be angry and frustrated at people who didn't deserve it. These are my regrets that in some way are sins that I can seek redemption for and other mistakes you can learn from.

Within your redemption you're awarded your freedom and what it is you learned from your mistakes. You use that knowledge to stay free and ahead of the game.

P.S There is more to come.

-KJ B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well, if your mom was right about you learning things the hard way, that means that you're learning things! We're sure you'd rather not have to pay the price you're now paying for your "education," but education is the key, even if it hurts to get it. We sure hope the regrets you have for the mistakes you've made will help you avoid those mistakes in the future so you can avoid giving up your freedom. We're looking forward to the "more" that is coming.

My Pretty Brown Baby

(For My Daughter Samaria)

My pretty brown baby

So soft and so sweet

I loved you since the first day

I heard your heartbeat

With every minute that I hold you

I kiss you upon your cheek

And I hope that I could teach you

How not to be like me

My pretty brown baby

You are a gift from above

More precious than a diamond

Or a pink, blue, and white dove

I really hope that you forgive me

For not being there for you

But I promise that sooner than later

I'll help you make it through

My pretty brown baby

Not even words can explain

How much I long to see you

And how many pleasures

Have turned to pain

I wanna build you up

And make sure you're driving

In the right lane

I know that times are tough

And you probably think momma is a little insane

But please my pretty brown baby

Keep your head raised to the sky

And have faith in your heart

That I am making a better life for you and I

And whenever you have doubts

That this change is for you and me

Just pray to the Lord above

To give you the vision

To see what I see.

-Black Diamond, 150 Crew

From The Beat: She may have faith and hope in her heart, but nothing will replace her mother not being there. You are in a tough situation. Right now you can't be with her, but you must think about her future. Everything that you do now, will affect her and your ability to be a mother to her. Instead of thinking about teaching her, how to NOT be like you, help yourself, rise above your current situation and make things better. Start making smart decisions. Be someone that you want Samaria to be like. Get your life together fist, then you will be able to teach her how to be successful.



My Call

The call to the streets is life
 Being able to be on your own street
 Knowin' everything gon' to be all right!
 Homies in their own dungeon
 Known as a block
 Where we could live
 And call it our own spot
 Now don't get me wrong
 I've expanded my mind
 I don't play the same old song
 It's just a high that I'm on
 I used to hustle drugs
 Used to be known as a thug
 Now I'm just who I am
 A young man doing everything I can
 The streets
 Yeah, they out here
 Changing at their own pace
 A youngsta gets wise
 He a disgrace
 But, hey
 That's how the game plays
 And if you get too wise
 Your name you pay
 The shadows of death
 The only shadows left

-Ryno LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Doesn't life offer you anything you value enough to fight the influence the street has on you, Ryno? You're wise enough to know that if you're ever off the streets for any reason, they'll move on without you, indifferent and cold. Life has bright sunshine. Why can't you go to the beach? The woods? Enjoy them! They can be fun for you. The shadows of death will always be there. Can't you step into them when you're in your eighties or older? Can you fight the power of death?

Living in a shady place
 makes you dream of the
 better that you can have

A Dream Of Jay Bandit's

It ain't like I'm saying my whole life is go' be about being in the streets. I got dreams I wanna accomplish. I'm gon' to buy me a nice house and one place that would be my first choice would be Lakeview.

I'm gonna find a two-story house to remodel into a three-story building with coo' apartments waiting to be rented by my "hard-working" folks.

I didn't grow up in projects, but I'm still from the ghetto and you can't take the ghetto outta me. I know how it is to live in a highly questionable, unstable environment. Living in a shady place makes you dream of the better that you can have, so believe my creation will be admired.

Plus, the cash flo' gone be stupid fo' a young entrepreneur!

-Jay LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Buying buildings and fixing them up is going to be a lot of work, but it can be done. What a fabulous idea! Would you also live in your building? How would you renovate the buildings? What kind of architecture, furniture do you like? Are your "hard-working" folks other homies who do what you do to earn their cash? Do you think you'll ever be able to leave the streets behind? Are they what you want for your whole life? We'll stay tune!

Random

Tadpoles and vanilla sprouts, baskets of split ends
 Sugar plum slob, appendixes, Barbie killed Ken
 Sacrificial artichokes, and Paula's gorgeous face
 NBA, toilet paper, Armageddon is being chased
 King Botsoggi, Queen Cock-a-doodle-doo
 The food up in MCJH (Marin County Juvenile Hall) tastes like
 goldfish poo

I wonder what it's like to eat your own toe
 Tonight I will pray to my chocolate milk; maybe it knows
 I taped my toe on the gigantic door hinges
 Hey, I found something that rhymes with "orange"!

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: It's fun to read how your mind wanders from one aesthetic to another with seemingly no transition, something like what can happen in real life, Scorpion. Sometimes life seems so serious and tragic that only a good dose of nonsense can save one's sense of balance. What does listing your random thoughts mean to you?

Don't Need 'Em

As time goes by I feel better about myself,
 At times clear minded but wounded from health.
 Walk around all day without a cent in my pocket,
 and my anxiety to snatch a purse.
 I try with all my might to stop it.
 Thoughts of love and hate as I let my pencil flow.
 I got people that owe me but my girl don't even know.
 Will I have time to grow into the age of 18?
 Walked in filthy but stepped out clean.
 My dream or it seems mean cause of the tick on my shoulder
 I tell the outsiders it's the symptoms of getting older.
 My heart gets colder as I'm away from my family
 Those are the people that make the whole Brito-Boogy miss the
 streets
 and da white boy too.
 I know he shakin' his head wonderin' what it do.
 Grandma on her knees prayin' for my freedom.
 I love my family but friends I don't need 'em.

-Brito-Boogy GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're only half right, BB. You're right to want to help your family (by not allowing yourself to be taken from them), but you're wrong about not needing friends. Real friends keep you upright and on a path. They tell you when you're slipping. They don't lead you into harm's way. You don't need the kind of friends that do dirt and put your life and liberty at risk. But there are friends who don't do that. We hope you find some, because they make success on the outs that much more likely.

What's That Calling My Name?

I don't look at the streets as a bad place to be in or a part of. You just got to know what you're doing.

I gotta get outta here and still face the streets. I ain't one of them funny-style cats that sit here in front of everybody face, talkin' 'bout, "I'm go' get out and be on some 'too goodie' stuff." I ain't perfect. I'm going straight back to the block and handle my business.

The streets call me because it's always action non-stop and it's hyphie juice in my blood line.

Sometimes I get in that mode where I don't have respect for nothing and I'm coo' wit' that, 'cause that's how I get my money, but that's what also got me a juvenile record. I'm learning how to control my stuff so I can have more options, like more "open doors" so I could maneuver.

-Jay LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Everybody gets discouraged and mutters, "Forget it, I'm going to do what I want," just like you do, Jay. But haven't you noticed it's just when you dismiss something that it comes back to bite you and causes a whole lotta mess? Does anything or any one besides the streets call you and/or appeal to your hyphie juice? Aren't the streets what have been bringing you into juvy? What do you think your destiny in the streets will ultimately be? You're too young to throw it all away to the streets!

An Interview With Ngo

B: Hi, Ngo!

Ngo: Hi!

B: Is there anything you'd like to be interviewed about today?

Ngo: Not really.

B: What's on your mind? What's going on for you down here at the Ranch?

Ngo: Same oh, same oh.

B: You're fourteen, aren't you?

Ngo: Yep.

B: You're the youngest guy down here right?

Ngo: Right.

B: Are you also the only Asian down here at the Ranch now?

Ngo: Yep.

B: Are you okay with that?

Ngo: Sure. I'm representin'.

B: Are you Vietnamese or Chinese?

Ngo: I'm both Vietnamese and Chinese.

B: So you identify with both cultures?

Ngo: Yes.

B: One more than the other?

Ngo: No. With both.

B: Have you ever been to China or Vietnam?

Ngo: No.

B: But you live in Chinatown, right?

Ngo: Yes.

B: So China's your heart?

Ngo: Yeah.

B: Do you hope to go to China someday?

Ngo: Yes, but I want to go to Vietnam first.

B: Do your parents come from Vietnam?

Ngo: Yes, at least my mom did.

B: Where in Vietnam?

Ngo: Saigon.

B: Do you know when she left Vietnam?

Ngo: When she was four she came to the US.

B: Did your mom tell you the circumstances of her leaving Vietnam?

Ngo: The war. She came her with her parents.

B: What about your dad?

Ngo: I don't know my dad.

B: Have you ever met your dad?

Ngo: Nope. No picture. He's somewhere in Marin locked up, either in County jail or San Quentin.

B: Did you ever ask your mom where he is?

Ngo: Yeah. He called my mom once while I was up here (at the Ranch.) You know, when you're in the jailhouse, there's gonna be hella noise in the background on the phone call. He's in a jail in Marin.

B: Does he know you're at the Ranch?

Ngo: No. My grandma doesn't like people knowing the family business. She doesn't want people talking--she's got a bad grandson, talkin' like that.

B: How does your being down here at the Ranch affect your grandma?

Ngo: Sad. Depressed, I guess.

B: How does it affect your mom?

Ngo: The same thing.

B: Do they come down here to visit you?

Ngo: Yeah. Both my grandma and my mom.

B: Are you your mother's only child?

Ngo: Yeah. I get all the shhh. When I got out (of juvy) in September, I got a flat screen TV and a cell phone. When I get out (of the Ranch) this time, I get a new computer, an I-Pod and a new cell phone. When I get this new library job up here (at the Ranch,) I get paid. I'm going to tell my boy, Hai, to get me a Lot twenty-nine fit, an SF hat, and some black baseball gloves to look fitted. But that's only if I get the dough from the library job. I'm gonna ask my uncle to open a bank account for me. I'm gonna cash out the check for the library job, 'cause I owe people money--not illegally, just from borrowing money.

B: What is it about the Vietnamese and Chinese cultures that you like?

Ngo: I like Vietnamese and Chinese food. It's the shhh. I like that they respect the elders, even in Asian gangs--they respect people with the wisdom, with the knowledge. Even if someone's younger, but he has been in the group longer, which means they have more seniority, you gotta respect them. That's how it is. If someone's older than me, but has less seniority than me, and he disrespects me, I gotta teach him he can't disrespect the elders.

B: How do you teach someone to respect you?

Ngo: You can beat their ass.

B: What else can you do to teach them to respect you without getting physical?

Ngo: You can basically talk to them. Without this type of discipline, you can't run a gang, a business; you can't even function in life. If you don't respect your elders, who can you respect? You have to show common courtesy. If you don't respect someone who's been in a gang longer than you, you can't really do nothin', and if you respect him, you might save yourself from getting killed.

B: It goes that deep?

Ngo: Yeah. For me, if you disrespect me, you're gonna get your ass beat. I can't handle it any other way because it's bad for business.

B: Didn't you say you were through with fighting?

Ngo: I never said I was through with fighting. I said I don't like it no more, but I'll do it anyways if I have to for business, but not personal, because it kinda gets bad if people think you're soft.

B: What kind of business are you talking about?

Ngo: Any kind of business.

B: Is there any other way you can get respect besides physically?

Ngo: You can let someone, like a little homie or someone I know, pass one time. But after that, it's gonna get handled. It's gonna get taken care of.

B: Is there anything else you'd like to say for your interview, Ngo?

Ngo: I'm from Chinatown and I like girls and I'm gonna hang with Jay Bandit when I get out.

B: Thanks, Ngo, for the terrific interview. We learned a lot about you.

Ngo: All right.

-Ngo LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You often write and talk about respect, Ngo. It obviously means a lot to you. How does respect relate to your mother and grandmother? Is it respectful or not for you as an only son and grandson to mess up, get arrested and sent to juvy and the Ranch? How does it affect you that your father is in jail? Hve you ever considered writing him a letter? Even a letter that you never send? Why do your grandma and mom give you a cell phone, computer, etc., each time you come out of juvy? Are they trying to get you to stay out of trouble? Are they so glad to see you out that they want you to know how much you mean to them? Do you think you deserve all these goodies? Why or why not?

I like that they respect the elders, even in Asian gangs — they respect people with the wisdom, with the knowledge.

Misguiding Yourself

What misguided means to me is going down the wrong road like selling drugs or not doing something positive with your life. When I hear that word I think of some wrong sometimes. I'm misguided, like instead of being in school I would be kicking it with a female or partners. I found out I was misguided when I was coming in and out of the hall.

It's never too late to change unless you are dead or in jail for life. I was misguided when I did what I did to get caught up in the system. It was self-disappointment because I dug the hole I lay in. What came out was knowledge and a new perspective. The only person who can misguide you is yourself. Life is what you make it to be.

-Larry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Just so you know even lifers can change while they are in jail (remember Tookie Williams?). This is a very interesting piece. A lot of people we talk to thought of being misguided as something that others did to you but not necessarily something you do to yourself. The way you explained it made sense and persuaded us to look at this definition differently. You sound hopeful and enlightened so we know you are on your way.

What I'm Going Through

I'm in the hall.

Going crazy behind four white walls.

I spent my birthday in this mutha

But luckily God made my roommate my bra-bra

We in here together.

We both learned a lesson that will stick with us forever.

I shed tears when I think of my

Two younger sisters and mother

My bra gotta baby outside

I bet he ain't gone do no more time

Everyday we ask ourselves why

In the hall

I can't wait till I get outside

I'm tired of hearing the staff mouth

I'm tired of milk

I'm tired of looking at that radio

I go to court on the thirteenth

I always wonder what they trying to do with me

On top of that I just turned eighteen.

Forget the ninjas that don't write me,

They are the ninjas who don't like me.

A ninja be real hungry

But a ninja ain't no top citizen

I'm in here hitting push-ups, getting swoll

Hating the fact we gotta sleep in boy's control.

I can't sleep at night.

I toss and turn on my back.

You know it's those hard, fake mats.

Wearing other ninja's drawers

Y'all this ain't cool in the hall

Can't change the pass

Now I'm showering with a whole bunch of ninjas around me

In the hall this isn't cool

Don't be a fool.

-Lil Twanny Toot, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Writing sometimes can help us feel better even if it doesn't actually change the situation we are in. We hope after writing this piece you felt a little bit lighter. It sounds like there are a lot of things that you don't like about this place. Do you think you will remember the halls next time there is an opportunity to get into trouble? One of the most important lessons in life is that the only real mistake comes from doing the same thing over and over again and expecting to get different results. Keep your head up and be smart.

The World Keeps Going

Man, I just wanted to talk about when you are in jail and how things don't stop, they keep going on out there and even when you are in here stuff happens. People get shot and killed. People move from your neighborhood before you get to say bye to them. I just don't like how when you're in jail something always happens to people that you love. That is not nice but you just have to feel it.

I hate when you be somewhere and people just try to have a lot of power when they really don't have that power. I do not like that, like today our teacher asked what "doing too much" was. It's all right for you to know how it is around the hood but man I don't like people like that.

When I get out I will try to change my lifestyle but if I can't then something will happen for the best.

-Guail, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's hard to know that the life is carrying on, with or without you. Feeling like you don't have any control or even the ability to say bye to an old friend must be very, very frustrating. We know it may sound silly but this is where writing can come in handy cause you get out some of that anger, frustration or sadness. Maybe writing isn't your thing; you should try to find productive ways to let go of some of the stress. As for the power hungry people working your nerves, get used to it. Life is full of people, who are often lost them selves, that feel they need to do mean things or belittle people or do any number of unnecessary stuff but you just have to let that be on them. Don't make their problems your problems.

Stuck In The System

The thing that I regret doing is getting stuck in the system by making the wrong choices and ending up in juvenile hall.

It was a really big mistake for me to make. It cost me a lot of time going from difference placements and back and forth from the hall. Another mistake I made was using drugs for as long as I did. It really changed my life. The drugs that I used have also made me stupider in the head permanently, which I regret too.

Also another reason that I think I got sent to the hall was because of drugs combined with bad thoughts.

What I think got me in the system also is me AWOLing from group homes and etc.

-Vadim, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Vadim, it seems that there are a lot of things that you would do differently. Unfortunately, we can't change our past. We can only use our past to help us in our future. How can you use your past to help you make better decisions?

No Regrets

I have made many mistakes in my life, but I do not regret any of them. If I did not make the mistakes I have made along the way, I would not know what I know today. If I did not make the mistakes I made, I do not know if I would the person I would be, but then again, I don't know who that person would be.

I have learned so much through my mistakes that if I was given the chance to go back and change my mistakes, I would have to tell them, sorry, I've met so many wonderful people, learned so many lessons, and even helped some people as well. I've lost friends and I have even lost family.

Sometimes I think maybe my friend would still be alive or maybe I would still have the money for rent, or maybe if he would still believe me, if I would not have made the mistakes I made, but then I remember that I would not be who I am today or know what I know today, and I thank God everyday and every morning for leading me back to His ever loving faith and making me, me, Krista and that's all I ever wanna be.

-Krista, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Krista, you are always going to be you, no matter, what choices YOU make. The point of regret is to think about the actions that you take in your life. Are you satisfied with the outcomes? You don't have to be somebody else to make different choices, you just have to be a smarter you. Regret doesn't have to be about the person you are, it can help shape you into the kind of person you want to be.

Why Did I Do That?

One thing I regret doing is carrying a knife to school, which is the reason that I am locked up.

If I could go back in time I wouldn't have taken the knife to school but now it's too late. Now I got to deal with the consequences.

I regret not listening to what my mom told me. I ignored her and now I regret not listening to her. Now I am in jail for not doing what she told me. Now I see that she was right in what she kept on telling me.

-Alejandro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So you had to learn your lesson the hard way - we can't tell you how many people have had to. When you make a mistake, it's okay to feel bad and regretful but not for too long cause like you said there's nothing you can do about it now. Start focusing on the things you can do now and when you get out to make your life better. And it wouldn't hurt to share with your mom what you shared with us for both of your sakes.

Motivation In Hard Times

I've been through hard times and the hardest may be yet to come.

But remember the best things in life don't come easily,

so keep a motivated mind and strive for whatever you want to be in life.

-Motivation Jack, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece seems to explain exactly why your name is Motivation Jack. There is a poem by Langston Hughes, a great poet of the Harlem Renaissance, entitled Mother to Son that discusses some of the same themes that you address in your work. Some of the words are: "So boy, don't you turn back./ Don't you set down on the steps/ 'Cause you finds it's kinder hard./ Don't you fall now - " In the poem the mother motivates her son to never give up. She wants her son to know that he will face hard times, but that he can overcome them. Keep striving, Motivation Jack!

Writing From These Walls

Hey Beat. It's Lil' Neph, writing once again from these walls. I send my love and respect to all locked up.

Well, the thing that I'm going to write about tonight is regret. I regret doing all of the bad things I've done in the past. I've put other people's lives in danger because of my stupidity.

You see, I used to steal cars and do stupid things with them! I regret taking other people's cars in the morning time and leaving them with no way to get to work. If there was an emergency in the house, they would have no way of getting to the hospital. I mean, anything could have happened to them because I took their car. But I'm done with that now and there's no turning back.

I just want to stop someone else from doing the stupid things I've done. Until pencil meets paper next week, I'm out!

-Lil' Neph, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds as if you are doing some growing up and a lot of times that comes after deep reflection. We respect that you are able to see the way that your decisions can impact other people. Looking back always helps one see things clearer. If you think about the impact that your choices will have on others BEFORE you do something, then we think that you will have fewer regrets. We really believe that you have the potential to help others not make the same decisions that you have made.

Never Make The Same Mistakes Twice

I regret all of the times I never listened to my mother. I regret all the mistakes I made in life. Especially the one that really affected my future. I can't do anything about the past, all I can do is learn and improve from my mistakes. Everything happens for a reason, either you learn from it or either you don't. But never make the same mistake twice because it might cost your life.

-Regretful, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're absolutely right! The only thing that we can do with our past is learn from it. What have you learned from the mistakes that you have made? How will you stop yourself from making the same mistakes? If everything happens for a reason, what is the larger reason that you are in Juvenile Hall? Keep thinking about how you can do and be better! Making the same mistakes twice can cost you the life that you could be living outside of these walls.

Feeling So Bad

Dear Beat,

I regret a lot of things, but most of all I regret the times I disrespected my mother by not doing what she said and back talking.

One time she was waking me up by yelling at me, but I was mad because I was up for a couple of days and I just wanted to sleep. So she was shaking me and I didn't want to wake up. So I got up and pushed her and she called my sister. So I went back to sleep.

When she got home from work I tried to apologize but she was mad. I never had a moment where I felt so bad. I never put hands on my mom ever again. I still get tears in my eyes thinking of it.

-Phillip, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It always feels terrible when we hurt people that we love. The important thing is to not let your regrets destroy you, but to let them help you grow and be a better person. Pushing your mother may have been a way that you hurt her physically, but consider how your decisions hurt her in other ways.

Do Right And Make Something of Yourself

I don't know what were the words that pierced my heart but I remember that it all happened my freshman year. I started smoking and doing things that I wasn't supposed to be doing because that life was so much easier than going to class and doing all the right things.

To me, life is all about choices and lot of times we make bad ones but you got to learn to make the right choices and think about what you do twice.

Even though your life may not be the life that you want, it is the only one that you got, so try to do right and make something of yourself. I'm out.

-Lil' Goofy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You couldn't have said it better - life is really about choices and oftentimes when we are young, we make the wrong ones. So you fall down a couple of times? You pick yourself up and start over again, which it sounds like you are in the process of doing. We hope that you are following your own advice cause it sounds like you are on the right track, especially with that last line.

Regret

I have many things that I have regretted. Many of the things if I could've taken back, but I feel whatever happened is part of the past and is up to me to prevent myself from doing it again. I regret committing all the things I did to come here because I now opened my eyes and know how to think before I talk, or do anything that might affect my dearly.

-Trace One B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We've been impressed by your writing, Trace, because it has the ring of honest sincerity. Whether it's the shock of being taken from your home and family or just the maturity that comes with years, we think you're ready to live a productive life without risking your health or your freedom. Prove us right.

Heart

This is CP. My name is CP because that's the name my mom gave me.

I didn't get to live with my mom and my adopted parents named me something else.

I got to know life from the bottom up. I grew up in the ghetto. I chose to do wrong to come up, instead of listening to my mom. She taught me about heart. She told me to be strong, even though I lived with another family.

My mom's heart is stronger than Lance Armstrong's.

Me and my brother both have come through struggles. We both have been shot and we both have been stabbed.

My mother has love in her heart for me and him. She is pregnant again. I will have a sister. I know that a heart can only beat if it has blood to pump, love will love no matter what happens. Heart is what defines a family.

-Cp, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you have a lot of heart. Heart gives us the ability to love people. It gives us the courage to do things that we wouldn't normally do. It also gives us strength. It sounds as if you got a lot of your heart from your mother.

Changes

I keep comin' to the halls and I can't see why. When I'm in the halls and think about life and my family and the people I be with, my head start's to hurt. My head starts to hurt because life and the world is so messed up. The world is the way it is because of men.

Men made wrong and the men is how has to change so the world can get better. The only way that's going to happen is if everybody would sit and think about how to change theyself. When you change yourself and start to do good things and turn to God — or whoever you believe in — and ask for help, that when other people are going to see that and want to change too. Don't just change some things about you, change everything. Change can be for the good or bad, but that's up to you.

-Ques B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: In order for "everybody" to sit together and think about how to change, it always takes one person to step out first and lead the group. Are you the one? What changes are you trying to bring about in your own life, and how are you going about it? If you make positive changes, you might be able to influence others to follow your footsteps.

Misguided From Childhood

I define the word "misguided" as, the parent/guardian that raised the minor did not teach he or she right. When I heard the word "misguided," I visualize my past and the way my mother and father raised me. If I was to express my past or feeling I will feel a whole lot better, but I don't have the courage to do so.

I am a misguided child, but I ain't gone blame it on my mom because she had to raise four boys and let family and friend stay temporarily. The people I talk to are misguided. I'm always around misguided people. The time I figured I was misguided was when I heard of the word.

It's never too late to change. A misguided person can be the most respectful person you know. I never confronted the person that misguided me.

-C-M B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You say you don't have the courage to discuss how you were misguided, but you do have the courage to recognize where that guidance went off the track. We think that, in itself, takes courage. (And we agree with you that it would take a huge load off your mind if you could open up about this.) It is difficult to overcome the bad guidance we get as children, but as we move into adulthood, it's easier to see where we went wrong, why we went wrong, and what we need to do to get back on track. Are you doing that?

Regret Joining A Gang

One thing I regret doing in my life is joining a gang. Listen, the thing about a gang is you have to have nothing to live for. It's hard to live that kind of life. You're gonna see a lot of things that are going to have you thinking.

Let me tell you about it 'cause I'm only sixteen and since I was ten I've been bangin'. It's a whole different lifestyle. It don't have nothing to do with school. It's all about murders, drugs, sex, alcohol, and money. Now, some say that it's also about family, but it's a lie, so don't get it confused. If you want a family, then you know that your only family is your biological family. Understand that the people that say that they are your friends and family that are gang members, they ain't nothing but gang members, 'cause if it comes down to something, they ain't gonna help you. They are gonna save their own butts.

I know the streets too much to ever get caught up. I'm the most real person that anybody knows and I know that I'm realer than a lot of people I see and know.

To all, stay safe and make the right decisions. Oh yeah, let it be known you have to know the streets if you're gonna be in the streets, but if you don't know it, your life will be over real soon. You will get killed and you will get shot by anyone. Heck, it could be me.

-Lil' J-M, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil' J, you say that you know the streets too much to ever get caught up, but actually you are caught up, in the streets or the gang lifestyle —no? You've obviously made a poor decision when you joined a gang, so now that you feel regret, what do you decide? Is there anyway to mend that mistake? It took some courage to admit your mistake, but it will take even more to correct it. Stop hiding behind that smirk and face your mistakes. Take your own advice.

She would give you an F on a test and laugh in your face when you asked for help.

A Blind and Deaf Teacher – In More Ways Than One

The worst teacher I ever had was my seventh grade math teacher, Mrs. Hans. She was a very angry person, partially because she was old, blind in one eye and deaf in one ear. To tell you the truth I don't understand why she hadn't already retired. Another reason is when she could write stuff down on the overhead she would write it so that it wasn't legible.

Then she could barely hear us say that we couldn't read it. And after she had given us our assignments she would go sit down at her computer and not pay any attention to the class until the bell rang and she would tell us to leave. We used to just sit and talk, never even looking at the assignment. We would walk out of the classroom and leave and she wouldn't even notice. The main thing that bothered me was how she didn't care at all. She would give you an F on a test and laugh in your face when you asked for help.

-Shotgun, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now that's messed up. It's pretty tragic to think that this woman who was paid to demand, expect and encouraging the very best inside her students would turn her back on them. Now to flip the script, who was your best teacher? What did he/she do that makes you admire them? Because those are the teachers to keep in your memory, the ones who see greatness in you, and push you to reach it.

Money Got Me Here

follow my first mind
that's what i always say
but this day i didn't
now i gotta pay
coming outside early morning
tryin' a make some money
runnin' to every car moving
trying to bust a knock
the first one on the block
so i ain't gotta short stop
but before i get my day started
i gotta go get the glock
then back to the corner so them fiends
can purchase what i got
i ain't takin' no short cuts
i'm tryin' a stay on top
so i go to the store get me a blunt
roll up some weed and sit on a rock
next thing i know five-oh
hit the corner all on my line
i hit a few gates
get on my way
then run and toss the nine
but before i knew it
they was everywhere
tellin' me to freeze
come out with my hands up
and get on my knees
you can run
but only for so long
that's what my mama always told me
i should'a followed my first mind
but all i was thinkin' 'bout was money

-Dada, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The thought of money today, devoured your mind the way a jungle beast does its prey. But living every day that same jungle beast way, soon makes your whole life one endless jungle night — till they cuff you and take you away. Yes, your mama was right, but no one listens to mama's advice when they think they're getting paid everyday, till the day they cart you away with no severance pay. And if as a juvenile you stay, they might even make your mama pay! But here's what we want from you DaDa — you be the OG who shows a better way. YG's will listen to you, 'cause they know where you've been and what you used to do. In memory of Citty-bo and all those who died who might've been alive today, teach — (1) crime doesn't really pay, and (2) there is another, better way even for those born in urban decay. Then folks can say, I will change, too, okay? Just look at DaDa!

I'm Gettin' Wise

Being misguided is when someone you know goes to jail then gets out, acting like that shhh was fun. They try to make it sound cute, when they know that shhh wasn't cool. I wouldn't wish jail on nobody.

If you ask me, I'm a tell you I'm through wit' jail 'cause it ain't me. Sometimes we get caught up doin' wrong, so you know you gotta get smart at what you do before they catch you again. The best thing you could do is change your ways, get a job and get a square chick. But if you do go back to the old you, step yo' game up and get yo' cake up, 'cause if it ain't snowin' I ain't goin'!

-Lil' Diddy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are on the road to wisdom. We can hear it in your words. But now, experience shows that if you leave yourself an out, you'll never see it through to your best formula for success. Still, it's so good, we have to repeat it: "... change your ways, get a job and get a square chick." (And you know no square wants to be called a "chick" — you feel?)

Baby Boy

I can't say I miss you 'cause I've never seen you. But I have many dreams at night of me and you. Holding you in my arms through the night, calming down your cries. But then I wake up and realize I can't even be there for you. But after two months and a half I can finally see light at the end of the tunnel, and I'm working my way to you. See you soon my Baby Boy. I love you.

-Baby Chino B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Isn't it strange that you value your son enough to change your ways and hold onto freedom more than you value your own life? But we don't care, as long as you see the light at the end of the tunnel, and keep walking in it so that your boy doesn't have to grow up with only stories of his father and not the real man you were meant to be. Next time that you're in a situation that you know is high risk, think back to your purpose — your baby — and what you gave up by coming here. By the way, when you say you've never seen your boy, we want to remind you that you see him every time you look in the mirror. Stay strong, and don't forget!



Never Be Replaced

baby i love you why did you let me go
yes it hurts me but i still want you to know
all the love we made could never be crazed
and i promise that you will never be replaced
baby i love you why did you let me go
yes it hurts me but i still want you to know
all the love we made could never be crazed
and i promise that you will never be replaced
damn this girl she really had me thinking
making her no worries in the future we will be living together
and i knew it wouldn't last forever
'cause i know good things don't last long
but we could've made it further
all the things you told me all were lies i know
then you said something about you just couldn't let me go
without a single reason or even a single fight
i gave the best of my life even through the loneliest nights
i got it bad no i had it even worse without you
'cause even though you're gone i can't let go
though i know that you're supposed to come back
i know that you're gone you left and never coming back
it's just a fact — that you gone
baby i love you why did you let me go
yes it hurts me but i still want you to know
all the love we made could never be crazed
and i promise that you will never be replaced
baby i love you why did you let me go
yes it hurts me but i still want you to know
all the love we made could never be crazed
and i promise that you will never be replaced

-Mien G-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes we're caught between reality and a dream. We just can't accept the way things seem to be, and late at night when we should be asleep, we're dreaming with our eyes open wide as our hearts — and sometimes the pain gets so bad, tears start to fall. In the lonely night we can't believe reality at all, so with eyes wide open we recall a better time. It's enough to make a grown man break down crying, so instead we try to keep on lying, telling ourselves it just isn't so — but we know, we know. When love is dying slow, the pain is the last thing to go.

Regret Coming Here

i regret coming to camp
up here it's like
your light goes out like a dead bulb in a lamp
when i went to court
i begged for another chance
but the judge didn't see things my way
he didn't even take a glance
he just did as he pleased
while I was hoping to go home
praying to god on my knees
that when i go to court the words that come out his
mouth will be
— released
but it didn't happen that way
as you can see
but it's all good now i'm manning up to my
responsibilities
and becoming one with inner peace

-Dopey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah you're manning up! And you know what? This poem testifies to the strength you've got. In the Gospel when Jesus in the garden, sweating blood while his disciples fall asleep after he asks them to stay awake because he doesn't want to be alone with his feelings, prays all night before the day he gets arrested to be sentenced to death, he asks God to "take away this bitter cup." However, he ends his prayer with, "but thy will be done." Hard as this bitter pill you have to swallow is, the character you're showing and the spiritual progress you're making, inside and out, looks a lot like God's will for you. Props!

Wrong Path

don't lead me in the wrong path
leave it to me 'cause i'll do the math
don't want to be left in a cast
my vision is blurry of my past
how long will this tragedy last
got the county whooping my ass
so they wonder why i'm crazy
is it 'cause i'm seeing ladies
carrying babies that seem to craze me
i got a navigation in my head
so i know where and how to make bread
don't need you to lead the way
because i'm a leader myself from back in the day
lost in my own world with nothing left to say
so i'm in this wrong path with consequences to pay
i know it will get better
but for now i'm locked up receiving letters
just waiting for some nice weather
and my time is light like a piece of feather

-Tqviet, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know you can withstand the storm, 'cause we've been watching you all along. What we don't know is if you can turn away from that easy pay that you already know how to make. The real money comes later if you're willing to wait for the legitimate, legal pay for quitting the mob and getting a job. Your girl and your whole world will be better as you enjoy the weather. Or chase the cheese in a trap and keep coming back.

Misguided People Misguide

I define "misguided" as a person who has been led the wrong direction and who has never had a good person to lead them in the right direction and became misguided. I think just not having a person who ever had a person who told them to do right and/or that doing right is a lot better than getting into trouble.

Whoever said that don't the right thing is wrong, damn it. Whoever told you that was misguiding you, so whoever was tellin' you not to do the right thing was a person who must have been misguided in their life.

-Keith B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you think most people, like older homies or adults who misguide youth, do it because they themselves were misled by someone when they were young, Keith? Do any older people misguide the young on purpose? Has anyone ever given you really bad advice? If so, who was it? Did you follow it? What happened?

Trust

One thing that I regret doing is taking my dad's car because I know now my dad don't trust me and I know he's mad at me because it's going on the third weekend and he's not coming to visit me, but it's cool.

I'm a boss and what makes it worse is that the day that I came to the hall is one of the days that I took his car. After that car got took that was the tenth car that I got pulled over in and they was good cars.

I don't know why I think about it when I come to jail, but this time when I get out I'm going to help my dad and mom. I'm not going to do my own and get my own and I got to get my life together because I got to get my little brother out of trouble because he follows me.

-MD, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know the responsibility you have to take care of your younger brother. No matter what you do, he will always be looking up to you and trying to be just like you. The fact that you want to be a better example for him says that you really love him. Trust is very important in any relationship. Some people say that once that's gone, you don't have anything. The good thing is that trust can often be regained with a lot of hard work.

What's One Thing You Regret Doing?

One thing I regret doing is getting involved with drugs 'cause I never thought I myself would ever be an addict to Crystal Meth. Whenever I had a problem, that's what I turned to it, when ever I was around the people who did it I wanted to do it.

I saw my drug use escalating. I was doing it like three times a month until I saw myself smoking it almost everyday.

People told me that I had a problem and I was in denial and I didn't want to face that I had a problem 'till I got locked up I opened my eyes and I did a lot of thinking and realizing that I had a drug problem and I needed to get help and I was only going to get help through recovery.

-Chatita, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this piece with other Beat readers. You are not the only one out there going through this. Addiction is not something that you see, it sneaks up on you until you realize (if you're lucky and strong enough) that you are totally out of control. You have taken the first step on what will likely be a very difficult path. Being around your old friends who do it is a sure path of return to your former destructive behavior - only one of the many reasons why this will probably be a very difficult period for you. Just know that there are folks cheering for you on.

When I ...

when i look into your eyes
my heart soars and flies
when i hold your hand
i feel like a man
when i give you a hug
i know it's a gift from above
when i give you a kiss
i find bliss
when i lay by you
i know you're true

-Jd, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sweet poem, but you need to know she's true even when she's away from you — so you can do this Camp program and be coo'.

One Regret

North Oakland

Juvenile hall

One Regret
Berkeley

One Regret
Boyfriends

One Regret
San Francisco

One Regret
Two months in jail

One Regret
LA

One Regret
Drugs

One Regret
Las Vegas

One Regret
Under 18

One Regret
Being Hyphee

One Regret
Dreads

These Regrets

One Regret
Alcohol

-Young Highfey, 150 Crew
From The Beat: That adds up to a whole lot of regrets. Is there anything you don't regret? Sometimes we say that the hardest experiences in life build the most character, make you the strongest. What do you think? Can things get too bad to ever have a positive side? How do you look at your experiences in regards to what you've learned and how it has shaped the positive aspects of your personality?

One Regret
East Oakland

One Regret
West Oakland

One Regret

Street Life

I'm in the street life real deep. I need to get out before I end up six feet we got young ninjas in this street life that can't read or write but will do a walk by and take yo' life.

I think about getting out of street life by leaving my turf and moving out of Oakland and start a new life and go to school and work but I'm addicted to the streets like a fiend addicted to crack, and I wonder if I leave will the streets still love me and accept me back?

-On the Map, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Look at the insights you show in this piece. It's like you understand and know yourself better than you even realize. If it's true that you are addicted to streets like a crackhead addicted to crack, then does that mean the streets could ruin your life the way crack ruins lives? (Think of it, have you ever met a crackhead who wasn't miserable?). So following your own logic, why would you ever want to go back to the streets? They don't love you. And they're not going to make you happy, you already know that—you're arguing for it yourself in this piece!

Stupid Reason

One thing I regret doing is coming to jail for a stupid reason.

I regret drinking that day

I came here

'cause I wouldn't be here today

if that alcohol didn't control me

that day and made me roll that person.

I wouldn't be sittin' here today if I just didn't

take a sip of the E&J,

but oh well, shhh happens.

-Young D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maybe in some ways regrets are our teachers. Like, now you know, from irrefutable personal experience, that drinking makes you do things that hurt you and bring you down. If you learned it for real, down to the bones, then that regret might well save your future.

Back-Stabbing Best Friends

For all in the Hall, stay solid. Man, this lil' Relly-bo, and I'm going to tell you about those best friends that would back-stab you.

Man, I had a patna, and you know we used to get down together — get money, sell drugs, robbin' houses. Then when you get locked up, that patna always do something behind your back. Then when you get out, he either says, "I didn't do it;" or, "I'm sorry, bro'." But, man, see some of those best friends be the type that he'll get money with you, and then when y'all come up — he want the raggedy stuff.

See, I wasn't on game, but I was ridin' one pair of shoes on my '92 Regal, and he wanted the lil' Honda Civic. See, then we got on this other hustle, and this ninja came to Reno with me, where we hit a lick together for four racks off a trick. But me and my female patna got caught. Before we did though, I gave bro' the money. So he runs off with the money leaving my female with twenty dollars of the money that he had already gave her. So we both had to get locked up for robbery.

So I was locked up for a month and a half. Then I had to come back to the Hall in Oakland. Then I had a visit from my mom, and she told me that my best friend took a pound of weed to Louisiana and didn't say nothin' to Moms.

He used to do it with me, but as soon as I got locked up and he took that money, it was over. Then my mom and some of her friends, they talked to my ex-friend's mom — and she helped my mom and her friends get a place. After that, she took the money and went back to Louisiana. So now my mom have to move! 'Cause the house we live in was supposed to be someone else's house.

So, listen to my story and stay real to the game, 'cause I am. And to all my ninjas in the Hall, get out and do something real with your life. Forget these streets but not yo' click! Quit standing on these streets selling drugs. I'm gon' have that Lincoln in a min'!

-Relly-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your story knows more than you do, 'cause your story makes clear that in the game, you can't even trust your own best friend. So when you tell folks to be solid to the game, it's like telling someone to trust a liar or let a drug addict hold your money for you — you're trying to be true to what will always eventually screw over you! Fast money goes as fast as its got, but learning from your mistake is something you are not doing — so the game is doing you, your mom and her friends, too! The game is abusing you, and you don't even have a clue. We don't mean to be clowning, but if you want to stop frowning — get up out the game and find a legal way to get paid, or you'll stay getting incarcerated. You blame your friend, but it's all about what you choose to do in the end.

What My Family Goes Through

My regret is when I went to jail. And you know, once you in the system it's hard to get out and there is nothin' in jail.

When you go to court they got like they don't want let you go and it's hard because y'all know yo' family gone be worried about you, and the visits they are bad. It's like you only see yo' family on weekends, and then you get a visit you be like damn I got to put my family through this they got? They got to get searched, and when you leave you get strip searched.

So jail ain't the spirit. To all youngstas: Don't come to jail. Stay out and be with yo' family.

-Tavon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope the youngstas hear you, Tavon. These are sound words and we can tell they come from the heart. But even more, we also hope that you hear you, and you remember what you said when you get out, so that neither you nor your family would ever have to go through this again.

Get Richer and Richer

One thing I regret doing is running from camp. I wish I would have stayed there and finished my program. But at that time for me it was not an option and the reason is that I had money on my mind and I wasn't going to let no one stop. Not even the judge.

See where I come from the plan is to get richer and richer. Getting dough, which stands for money, is me and my cold patnas top commitment and we do anything to get it.

Even if I had to bust my gun to get it, or break into someone's house or take it from someone on the street or sell drugs what ever I got to do to get it. That's just how I was raised. I didn't have a father, I had a mother and sister's besides that the ninjas on the street raised me.

-Lil 'Marie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So how's that plan working out? You're in jail, making NO money at all.. All the money you do earn ends up coming with side prices: Huge amounts of stress from police, more and more chances of getting killed, and then the deep down voice that you can't run away from that knows you're doing something wrong. You may have grown up not knowing you had other options, but now you're a young man, and you can't hide the truth: That money is blood money and it won't ever give you what you need. It's not too late to choose another path.

The Wrong Friends

One thing I regret was hanging out with the wrong crowd. The people that were and is chill is into stealing cars or things of lots of value. Next time I will find better friends. I define misguided as being mislead in what you ask that person or what you were supposed to do. I think I am as misguided as being misled in what you ask.

That person or what you were supposed to do. I think I am misguided in a way because I don't know who to hang out with sometime I am but other times I feel that I can make the right choices. I think it was doable when I ended up in Juvenile Hall.

No I don't think it is too late because the person who mislead me is no longer in my circle of friends and I've been talking to my guidance counselors and my mom about what I really wanna do. I'd rather not confront them. I would rather just let it go.

-Eugene, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah, like the saying goes, with friends like that, who needs enemies? All they did was get you in trouble...when you imagine what kinds of friends would you would want, what are they like?

My Education

One thing I regret doing is not going to school, 'cause without an education you ain't gon' be shhh but another' ninja working at a fast food restaurant.

Man you gotta think, do the government or anybody else give a dam about you if you didn't go to school?

No. That's why you gotta take the opportunity that lay down in front of you, 'cause if you don't you gon' regret it like I did sooner or later.

-Hakeem, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds like being locked up tapped you into first-hand knowledge, and it's the kind of straight up wisdom that can't be taught in school. So now, armed with this new knowledge, it's time to live it and soak up all the learning that CAN be taught in school! Peace - we're looking forward to hearing what you do.

What Goes Around...

I regretted when I pulled a lick for an I-pod, and I regretted coming to Juvenile Hall, and also because when I hit him he started crying. I know that little thing that what goes around comes around well I already did they go around and I know they come around was going to hunt me down.

And the hurt was me in Juvenile Hall, being locked up, getting treated like animals, people telling us when to talk and when not to talk and babysitting us. It's not the place to be -- I mean I made a mistake, and now I'm learning from it.

-Cheyenne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The animal, one day, gets sprung from his cage, and has the chance to run free. You did something wrong and you know it - not know it because the judge told you so, but because you know it from inside your own conscience - and now, you'll soon be back out, having learned a little bit about who you are and what matters to you. Like being out of the cage, for example.

When I Smoke

When I started smoking, everything around me slows down. I get calm and sometimes sleepy. The first time I smoked I got hella hungry. I ate anything I could find that didn't have nothing to do with the stove. I became a microwave chef. When I get high I can play a game all day or play basketball all day, but mostly I stay posted on the block,

Everybody on my turf smoke grapes. From morning to night we run though at least several zips, on like five heads. That's like an eighth an hour. We get hella high, but still we stay on point. On our toes, 'cause somebody's always tryin' to catch us slippin'. Weed is just something I do not just to get high but to waste time, calm down, or sometimes I get ready for a big meal.

-Lil' Boony, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well no wonder you need the weed, if you're living a lifestyle that is that stressful. Like you say, if someone "catches you slippin'" the price is just too high. Here's a question for you... we understand why weed seems like a good short-term solution to a long term problem, but what about your future? Like, where do you expect to be in ten years? Where do you want to be? Lastly, we have to disagree when you speak about smoking and being on your toes. You can do very little as high as you are.

I regretted when I pulled a lick for an I-pod, and I regretted coming to Juvenile Hall, and also because when I hit him he started crying

Working on Making it Better

I regret a lot of things that I've done. Sometimes I regret gettin' involved in the game.

By this I mean that I sometimes regret getting' involved in the drug scene, the gang scene and the street racing scene. I regret it because I have hurt a lot of people, especially my mother. I regret hurting her the most, because she has always been there for me and no matter how much she tried to lead me in the right direction I would go against her and do drugs, get in gang fights and get tickets for speeding and driving without a license.

I know now how much I hurt her and am working on making it better by getting out of my root program successfully, instead of running like I did from my last program.

-D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Best of luck - it's good to know that there are people who care about you enough to be so upset when you have trouble. Even in the midst of all these regrets, it sounds like you also feel good love and support coming from family. That can make you stronger, make it easier to not run.

I Love You Meach And Meezy

I'm sorry that you're gone, but I still love you.
 Meach, I know I didn't go to your funeral.
 I couldn't get there on time.
 I hope I would have saw you before you were buried.
 You know I'll always remember you, because you
 thought I stole your bike,
 but it wasn't yours, yet I still love you.
 Meezy, even though you're gone we'll always be
 friends.
 I'll never forget you coming over my house to eat
 dinner.
 You'd buy the shrimps, we'd cook them and
 something else and have a nice dinner.
 One year gone, and no love lost, even though you're
 gone ya'll still my best friend.
 I'll never forget the night you passed. I shed many
 tears. I was mad.
 I stopped hanging out for a minute. I was sad. I
 didn't know what to do.
 I missed you. Soon I started to go back hangin' out
 with my younger friends,
 not the older ones.
 You know when Meezy died, Meach was having
 dreams that he was going to pass.
 And when Meach died I too started to have dreams
 about death.
 I hope I don't lose my life.
 Even though you're gone, I'll be there one day and
 not soon.
 Meach and Meezy I still love ya'll. RIP

-Young Ro, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The death of loved ones haunts us forever, especially violent deaths on the streets. Instead of turning to purple or drink or pills to bury your grief, turn away from the streets! It seems impossible, but some have done it and if you find them they will help you. Be safe.

Never Had A Bad Teacher

I don't think I really even had a real bad teacher that I really hated or anything, 'cause I realize now that all they were really trying to do in the first place was to teach me and help me learn something new so that I could accomplish and succeed with everything I do later on in my lifetime.

I mean sure the teacher will yell at you, embarrass you in front of the whole class and tell you don't ever make that mistake again, only because she/he wants you to accomplish, succeed, and to never make that mistake in your lifetime, because if you make that mistake, or make a mistake in general you could probably get into some serious trouble and get locked up behind bars because of some stupid mistake you've made, so listen to and obey your teachers, cause you never know: they just might be trying to save your life.

-Lamarr, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It takes a lot of maturity to give such a shout out to teachers, because most students feel like they have to throw out negative attitudes about teachers in order to be cool, etc. You see the intentions behind most teachers' behavior. You can think for yourself, and you're not afraid to do it! This will serve you well in life.

Misguided

Misguided is another word for saying misguide,
 anyone can misguide you
 whether it's a human being, animal, or a car.

In other words they can lead you the wrong way and get you
 caught up
 with something dangerous, or illegal.

-Lamarr, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great definition! You took it universal. Have you ever misguided someone else and regretted it?

I also regret not spending time
 with the fam' and my girl.

Misguided Youths

Misguided to me, is someone who was fed the wrong info' or was never given information at all. Someone who messed up at his and another's expense. When I hear the word, I think that people are confused. A lot of youths are misguided 'cause not a lot of people do them right or spend enough time helping them.

Me, myself, I am not misguided. I was taught right, but I refused to listen and was hard-headed. A rebel in some way. Sometimes though people didn't tell me what I had done was wrong, and that makes me feel as if I have not done wrong — so, in a way, I have been misguided. It is never too late to change though, even on death row you can change. All you need is the heart and the ambition to want it, and you have to see the need to change.

One time I was misguided, was in football when the coach said I wasn't doing something wrong — but I knew it was wrong. I told him and confronted him, and he realized he was wrong. To be misguided, means you have to be guided, but sometimes, doing what you just feel is right, will work for you.

-Gordo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can tell you were taught what was right. And, yes, we can tell you allow(ed) yourself to be misguided as well. But that story about standing up to the coach when you knew what he was telling you to do was plain wrong, yes! Now that's the kind of rebel we take our hats off to and throw them into the air with a rebel's cheer! Rebel against injustice and do the right thing. It doesn't really matter how you get there, but doing the right thing is exactly what we mean by let freedom ring!

From Regrets To Wisdom

One thing I regret, is doing what I did to get in here. I can't really speak on it, 'cause I'm still going through all that court stuff. If I could go back to the day it happened, I would do a couple of things differently. One would be not do what I did!

One thing I don't regret doing, is telling the people I love, good-bye for now. I knew I would be doing some serious time, so I said my farewells. At the same time, in a way I don't even regret doing what I did, because this will just help me grow as a person and learn a lot more so that, by the time I'm out, I won't make the same mistake and regret it all over again.

I also regret not spending time with the fam' and my girl. I had it all out there. Well, not all, but enough to be comfortable and happy. Now I got other people's clothes and nasty food! Hopefully, I will grow from this and not regret the same bad choice ever again.

-Gordo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You already have grown a lot, on the inside, in your thinking. Of course, it's not the same thing as being out there again facing the same temptations. You never say what exactly went down, 'cause your case is still pending, and that's good. Still, you might look at the circumstances surrounding whatever brought you here, 'cause the action itself is usually just the last thing in a long line of bad choices. Change your circumstances (playgrounds, playmates, playthings), and you won't be back in a place like this.

This Is Me

i thank god every day for paving the way
 'cause he made me what i am today
 a young entrepreneur with amazing talent
 in order to be the best you must take the challenge
 i'm tryin'a be number one 'cause number two don't
 matter
 people trying to pull you down when you climb the
 ladder
 ninjas hate to see you up but love it when you
 down
 that's why i'm always quiet when i come around
 'cause you talking mess that's why i rap
 i'm getting n-b-a money with no salary cap
 momma it feels good puttin' money in your mailbox
 and this is to my ninjas locked up in the cell block
 the sun don't shine
 that's why i spit these rhymes
 to ease my mind
 for real i gotta get away
 the sun don't shine
 that's why i spit these rhymes
 to ease my mind
 for real i gotta get away
 in life you go through joy and pain
 and when somebody close dies it gives you a
 migraine
 and a whole lot of stress and a whole lot of tears
 days turn into nights and nights turn into years
 i'm not happy here i'm on another atmosphere
 i gotta get away just to get my mind clear
 that's why i smoke so much 'cause it relieves my
 stress
 just imagine every day i gotta wear my vest
 i gotta watch my back 'cause ninjas plotting to jack
 and to my ninjas in jail you better keep ya head up
 and to my ninjas in the 'hood keep ya grill up
 the sun don't shine
 that's why i spit these rhymes
 to ease my mind
 for real i gotta get away
 the sun don't shine
 that's why i spit these rhymes
 to ease my mind
 for real i gotta get away
 shhhh if i die today shhhh i lived my life
 and i can do it again i'll do it twice
 no more moving white or shooting dice
 or creeping late-night tryin'a screw wife
 chayah the sun don't shine
 that's why i spit these rhymes
 to ease my mind
 for real i gotta get away
 the sun don't shine
 that's why i spit these rhymes
 to ease my mind
 for real i gotta get away

-Mien G-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In the recovery movement they say, there's nothing wrong with mistakes if they help you find your way. What we're trying to say is that you don't have to wait till you die to quit your scandalous ways. There once was a poet named William Blake who wrote "The Proverbs of Hell" in a small book called *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. The proverbs get spit in "the voice of the devil" — but on the level, his devil's headed for heaven; not the frozen image of perfection hidden behind fluffy clouds, his heaven looks like hell to the self-righteous angels of fake perfection! The flames of passion and desire are teachers of truth, but only if you're courageous enough to take the proof and learn from your mistakes — 'cause love and not self-righteousness is what it takes to make a man according to God's plan. In the end, the angel sees the truth, dives into the flames of "hell" as his proof and becomes the so-called devil's friend. But are you really ready to live your life again starting today — you don't have to die to be reborn, young Mien. Oh, and did we say, your rhymes fly high as a kite? Okay? So inside your heart, make your get-away even while at Camp you stay. Start anew today!

Can't Sleep

where do i go — what do i do
 i can't deny i still feel something
 and girl i wish that you'll say
 you feel the same —
 last night i tried but i couldn't sleep
 because you were in my head
 i was lonely and i needed you next to me
 but it gets harder as i tried
 i never meant to do you wrong
 and now all is said and done
 i hope you won't be gone so long
 oohh
 yo how can i go to sleep
 with the thought of you stuck in my thoughts
 even though you away shorty you remain in my heart
 i can't risk losing you by my side
 can't stand the thought of you with another guy
 been hating you so much because you're bringing tears to my eyes
 i can't believe that i almost cried when you said to me goodbye
 haven't felt a hurt like this since my great grandmother died
 i felt like you were the one of this world
 i should've put you first before me i don't want another girl
 if only you could know how you mean to me
 so many feelings i haven't shown
 don't want you to get the best of me
 i'm willing to change it all if you're once again my baby
 i'm going crazy i don't know what to do
 'cause i still got feelings for you and i just can't get over you
 girl i really miss the way you make me feel
 i can't get over you it's all real
 i think about you daily it's driving me crazy
 i hope i can go on without my baby
 last night i tried but i couldn't sleep
 because you were in my head
 i was lonely and i needed you next to me
 but it gets harder as i tried
 i never meant to do you wrong
 and now all is said and done
 i hope you won't be gone so long
 oohh
 girl i miss them days that we had
 and now that you're gone i'm feeling lonely and sad
 i never thought that love could make me feel this way
 all the pain that's come to just another rainy day
 just hoping for another chance so maybe we can chill
 just what we had seemed so real
 instead i'm just thinking about you
 i'm so lost and confused i don't know what to do
 'cause i'm living life and i'm living life without you
 i need you by my side so i can hold you tight
 girl i'm gonna treat you right
 i'm missing you so much i need to feel your touch touching me
 baby
 last night i tried but i couldn't sleep
 because you were in my head
 i was lonely and i needed you next to me
 but it gets harder as i tried
 i never meant to do you wrong
 and now all is said and done
 i hope you won't be gone so long
 oohh

-Mien G-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, George, if the power of love you set to song could change those mistakes you made in the past that made love go wrong, your love would still be going strong without all the baggage of pain you're taking on. Still you ask her for a second chance and you promise that for the sake of your romance, you're willing to change — but are you willing to get yourself up out this street game that has you living in chains and no just the ones they put on your feet. The chains that lead you to defeat are the ones you carry in your mind, the things it has you doing you lose more than just this incarcerated time — you lose perspective, you lose direction; it has you making bad decisions. So when you promise her to make revisions in how you live your life, from top to bottom trade in that attitude that had you doing wrong and start doing right. Then whether or not she comes back into your life, your heart will grow lighter, your future brighter — and if she does come back, you'll live a life of freedom standing right beside her, proving the fact on a daily basis you've changed all your ways for love's sake.

Birthday In The Hall

Let me tell you what happened the day of my birthday. The staff woke me up at 6:45 a.m. for wash up. The staff was like get up Saria and I felt like Lil' Jon so I said "Okay!" Then my day started.

I went to court and me and this girl kept talking loud so they was like shut up 'fore we kick you out then I thought of Fab and said, "I don't give a eff you could kick me out!" 'Cause I'm eighteen and like Outkast, so fresh and so clean.

Then a cop came in the room and handcuff us and I say, "Mr. Officer, Mr. Officer take these handcuffs off of us." Then they put me in a room by myself. The judge called my name and I went in the room and she said released to "Oh! Oh! Sheila."

So we went back to the hall I packed my shhh and five minutes later they told me I had a release. As I was walking out one of my friends started to cry and she said, don't leave, so I said, "I don't wanna leave, but I gotta go right now," and left. The end.

-Saria, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for that very clever piece. Clever like all the others. Glad you're out, but we'll miss your fine wit', Miss Saria.

I stay blaming other people for my issues when I need to step up and be a woman not a girl and my biggest fear is becoming a woman living on your own all alone in a home!

The Jail Game

Every week I read The Beat and I see the same people saying the same thing over and over again- when I get out I'm gonna do this and that when you turn around they right back. Let me tell you the line everybody use: "Since I been here I changed, I go to Church, and I am not going to hang out with the same people."

Well if you do all that you say then tell me why you back? This ain't shhh but a jail game when you locked up you say all these lies and you go to church just to see the girls and they ain't even cute and what could they do for you shhh they locked up too. You going to keep coming back 'till you can't come no more than you going to Rita and that ain't no game. You won't come out the same so I am just trying to help. You know that the jail game is getting old and if you don't claim down who knows where your life will go.

-Saria, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Truer words never said. No one who goes to the pen comes out the same. That is a hard place, where you have to be harder than you ever wanted to be just to make it. But no use criticizing others when you're sitting in the same place as them. And no use predicting what other folks will do, when you should be focusing on what you, yourself should do.

My Feelings

How I feel every night before going to sleep, no girl should feel, I feel dirty, ugly, misused, and mistreated, I feel like crying 'cause I know inside I am slowly dieing after being in a place like this for so long that when you get out you done forgot about home well that's how I feel and that's real.

-Saria, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are a queen and no one should ever have treated you different. Remember to act with the dignity that you deserve, though.

Am I Wrong

Am I wrong 'cause she wasn't doing her job so he came to me?

Am I wrong for giving him a good place to sleep?

Am I wrong for cuddling with him under a sheet?

Am I wrong 'cause I love him and he loves me?

Am I wrong because I messed up your family?

Am I wrong because your man is my fiancé to me?

Am I wrong for writing this poem?

Am I wrong because you so sick of love songs?

Am I? Can anyone tell me? Anyone?

Who care's what you think only God can

God could judge me.

-Saria, 150 Crew

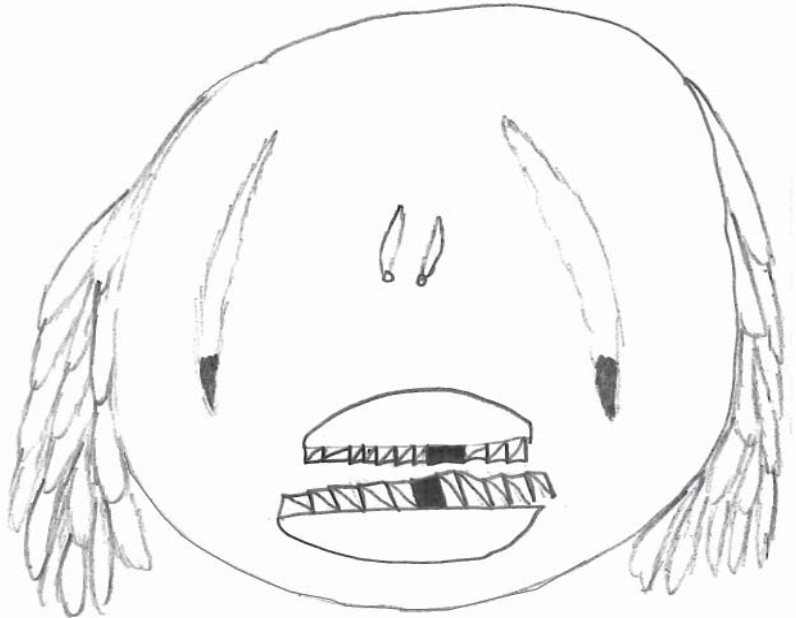
From The Beat: No, you can judge yourself too. And it sounds like you're not to comfortable with what you've done.

My Fears, My Thoughts

My brother once told me "Let no one see your fears" which is why when I cry I hide all my tears, he also told me to be strong and always hold on never give up on anything, and my life is fallin' apart 'cause I am starting to give up on some of my dreams, if he was still here to guide me the right way I would still be on track, but I can't blame it all on him 'cause I still have a part to take care of, I stay blaming other people for my issues when I need to step up and be a woman not a girl and my biggest fear is becoming a woman living on your own all alone in a home!

-Saria, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh Saria, don't be afraid to grow up and become a woman. It's your greatest power. Being adult can be hard, but at the same time, you get to make all the decisions for you. You get to decide who you want to be, how you want to live. We know what a smart cookie you are, and we have a feeling you'll do just fine. You just need to take all that sass and smart and point it in a forward direction!



Not The One For Me

I miss your kisses and your sweet touch
Boy you know I loved you so much
You left me here

And I was lost without you near
You said I grew on you, and I was part of your life
Then you asked me to marry you and be your wife

I accepted so graciously
Then you said you wanted to start a family

It was too good to be true
But I once again believed you

Now I'm facing reality
Looking at it with a different mentality

I'm in the hall
Staring at the wall

While you're on the outs cheatin' on me

So I got to get over you and let you be
'Cause know I see you're not the one for me.

- Juicy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wait a minute here. Is the same boy that you were praising in another piece? Now you tell us he was on the outs cheating on you? And you were ready at age fifteen to have his babies. Girl, you're young but you're making decisions that will effect the rest of your life, so you'd better start thinking about the big picture, as hard as it can be.



Love Me, Love You

I remember when I first

Laid eyes on you

All the B-S to the side

You was on me

Think about how short

You are physically

But in your heart and mentally

You're bigger than the world

See baby I'm-a keep

The haters where

I can see them

I'm-a be a man

My heart

'Cause they can't break us apart

Seriously, baby girl

Tell them like this

Choose up or loose up

Dough up or blow up

'Cause in a minute

I'll have myself writing books

About them fine looks

I end like this

Me and you

Soon to be free

Thinkin', thinkin', thinkin'

And doing some more thinkin'

She got me wantin'

To pull one on her
Can't flick this thought to the
side

Can't even jump up high
And even survive the love

I have for her

Tell her like this

Bop it, man

Baby, let's leave this one

To the one above

She got my mind

On that spin mode

But check it

This love can

Be as old as the

First Nintendo

For real

I ain't playin' you

Like you some type of ho.

-Lil' Puerto Rico, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lil' Puerto Rico, you've got her attention, now it's time to mention your exact intention. Tell her what you want - a relationship or a crush? Another thing, when are you going to return to teaching with your hard-hitting pieces? We over in 150-3 miss your thoughtful pieces. YOU came up huge back in the day, and now you are writing straight corn dog shhh that in truth only means something to you and that special one. Bring back the mighty Puerto Rico we all know, love and appreciate. Teach us!

He Loves, He Loves Me Not?

When I saw you at church I was mad but at the same time I was glad.

I wanted to stare but was afraid you'd see me.

I could've stared at the back of your head for hours and wouldn't get tired

I wanted to run up, hug, kiss and hold you

Then you looked at me I thought I was about to melt

One look from you is all it takes I'm willing to do anything no matter how high the stakes

I thought I was over you

But see my love for you is true

I was able to mouth out I love you

I know you feel the same way too

It was hard for me to get up and leave

But I didn't want you to see me cry

So the question I'm asking myself now is why?

I gave you a place to stay told you to stay low out 5-0's way

Was kicking it worth your liberty?

If so... do you really want to be with me?

Think about it, and let me know

Remember I'm your lady not a silly hoe

- Juicy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a very heartfelt and beautifully written piece. Tell us more about why this young man deserves your attentions. What are you like together on the outs? Do you treat each other with respect? Do you help each other to move ahead? Or do you get into trouble together? What parts of your relationship are the ones you think will sustain you in the long run?

Hand Of A Man

Naw, on the serious tip

It's hard to be a

Young man in such

A world of hate

I step up to home plate

Was pitched hundreds of fast balls

I caught a case

First-degree murder

Now I'm in the Hall

I express that I can be the best

'Cause they put me

On love's test

At age thirteen

Was almost whooped to death

My step-dad is dead

Lays six feet under

With maggot's feeding in his bed

I prayed to God

Put him on his death bed

But really what I thought in my head

Was that he was

A true man

With re-building

Wealthy land,

But since he died

I'll be the man

To take his hand

And lead my family

To a wealthy land

-Lil' Puerto Rico, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Life gives us some messed up situations. Sometimes, we think things are one way and they turn out to be another. You were dealt a tough hand to play. You've made some mistakes, and it's obvious that you want to do right. Do you know how? Share your thoughts in The Beat! By the way, was there anyone that showed you the right way? What is the right way? We know that you have the heart and brains to succeed and support your family, but do you have the information that you need? You are a leader, just make sure that once you have followers, you know where you are going.

Priorities

I have been kickin' with my homies for a couple years now and I would do anything for them. But the only thing that I need to change is how I act with my real family. I need to show my mom, sister and brother that I can actually do good with my life and not dedicate my whole life to the homies.

I love my first family with all my heart. But so many times I have let them down because I didn't want to let down the homies. I need to start thinking about my priorities.

Dedicated to my family and the homies

- Nicolasa

From The Beat: The problem we have with your priorities, La Nicolasa, is that it's clear to us you still haven't got them in place. You want to show your family that they come first, but you don't want to let down your homies. Sooner or later, you'll be right back in the same situation, torn between what you owe those who've always been there for you and always will be, and your street friends who will often want you to do things that will only hurt your family. So it's past time to start thinking about your priorities. It's time to re-order them.

My One Regret

I regret getting into trouble with the police and gang banging. When I was in high school on the outs, I started getting in more trouble, not going to school, not doing my homework, skipping classes, doing drugs, not listening to my mom, not coming home, and doing what I wanted to do. I felt my life was ruined because of my mom, but it was because of me. I had hurt her really bad and made her cry every night. At first I didn't care too much what she had to say or what she thought. It was my way!

After I started getting arrested and knowing what I was doing I wanted to stop because I had a lot to lose. I missed my mom caring about me and telling me what to do instead of not caring at all about what I had done. I lost my lil' brother and tore my mom's heart and family apart. All she ever wanted was me to understand and do the right thing.

Now that I'm in here again, for the first time it shows that my mom does not care! I love my mom very much, but her and my attitudes have both changed. I have started a new life by accepting the Lord, and doing what is right. Even though this is my third time in here, I really want to change. Her attitude is way different. When I call her she doesn't want to talk about court or nothing. She doesn't even ask how I'm doing and she gets off the phone with me earlier than my time is up.

I just want to be with my mom and build my relationship with my mom, to be more trustworthy to her. I want her to "know" that I love her very much and want to build our family back in place. When I get out I want to do the best for her and me. My main goal is to make her happy and graduate from school. She would be so proud of me and I'm determined to make things right. My main focus is on my life, my family and my career, my behavior when I get out.

The biggest regret I have is making the wrong choices and not following directions. That will change in the future. I want my mom to know that I'm trying and I will get my act together. I'm working to be a leader, not a follower, and going down the right path.

-Jessica

From The Beat: We really appreciate this heart-felt piece, and we hope you share it with your mom. She probably knows all this anyway, but it's always nice to see how much you're loved in print! Just remember this, Jessica, the negative relationship you developed with your mom didn't happen overnight. It took time to get that way, and finding blame isn't very useful. What is useful is to recognize that it will take time to put things right between you, and that you have to show your mom some understanding and patience. As she sees the sincerity of your desire to change and be trustworthy, the relationship you're trying to make with her will develop and strengthen, and you will have your reward.

Two Things I Regret

The first thing I regret is treating my mother like she wasn't worth nothing. She always told me to stop my gang banging and to get my education and not follow my cousin's steps. I regret it because she has always been there for me through thick and thin. No matter what I do she still is there for me.

The second thing I regret is leading my brother through the wrong life. He learned from my mistakes and it hurts me very much to see him going through what I've already been through. Now that I've changed, my brother doesn't want to see it. I turned my life around for the better. I realize it now that I'm getting older and life changed. One day he will see it, but hopefully it's not too late for him to realize.

I just want to say that I'm sorry mom that I hurt you. I wish I would have realized earlier that you were always there for me, not those supposed friends. Mom, you're not only my mother but also my best friend. For my brother, forgive me for leading you through the wrong path. I love you both very much.

-Bolita

From The Beat: The burden of pain you carry with you, Bolita, proves that you hurt yourself the most by the choices you made. Because you were a child, you never thought about your brother modeling his behavior after yours, and now that you're a young woman, you can see how much influence you had on him and it hurts. We, too, hope that he turns his life around as you have before he has to pay heavy prices. But in the end, you are not responsible for his choices, even if you influenced them. You are only responsible for your choices, and if you continue making good ones, responsible ones, and keep walking forward, your brother will see that as he saw how you acted in the past. We hope you show this beautiful but sad apology both to your mom and to your brother. And we wish you nothing but good luck.

My Regret

The only thing I even regret seriously is hurting the people I've hurt and especially my family. Other than that, I don't regret anything else because from everything I've learned a lesson or learned what I know now. It also makes me who I am today. That's my only regret.

-Me

From The Beat: When you think about those people you've hurt, does it make you want to change anything about the way you live your life? What?

Consequences

My 'hood is my home, the streets are my backyard

Since I was young haciendo desmadre just for fun

Didn't think twice, I didn't even think once

But little did I know the consequences that would come

In and out of jail ever since I was first a teen

Being accused of being a gangsta, criminal and even a thief

It never affected me 'cause I knew that's who I was

People ask me, "Why you wanna do that?" I simply answer "'cause"

I do what I want, I don't care about your thoughts

You got your own mind just like I got my own heart

The things that I do are a part of my life

So just live your own and let me live mine

-Pac

From The Beat: It's not that simple, Pac. Just wishing to be left alone to live your own life in your own way just isn't going to happen as long as some of what you do interferes with the way other people want to live their lives. You're very smart, and that's a plus. But being smart is not enough, and it's not a justification for hurting yourself or others. We don't know what brought you here, but we do know that this is no place for anyone who wants something out of his or her life. So, whether you like it or not and whether it's fair or not, you're the one that's going to have to make some adjustments if you want to stay free. Do you have any changes in mind, or do you think you can do the same as before without paying the same price?

My Last Piece

About a year ago back in the spring of 2005, I used to look forward to my Friday afternoons here at Hillcrest. The Beat Within religiously came every Friday, and I remember how hard me and all my classmates would try to get our piece and our names known in the Beat. I'd write about everything, from my experiences with drugs to the people that have done harm to me. I really let myself go and put it all out there, and it felt really good to see my writings in print for all to see! It felt especially rewarding when that special piece got "piece of the week!" All was great. This time around back here at Hillcrest those rewarding Friday afternoons are just like any other day. With all the limitations and regulations put on The Beat by those in power here at Hillcrest, they have made The Beat all it was good for exactly the opposite.

Ya know, not all of us are gang members and it sucks the reason for all this "nonsense trouble" is gang related. I've been back here for awhile now, yet this is my first piece writing again. We no longer get the complete version of The Beat Within, but a tiny one-page pullout (ooooo whooooo!!) Some of the best writings I've ever read have come from The Beat (other than the Hillcrest section), yet they won't allow us the whole complete Beat. They think that it's wrong for us to read writings from other facilities. Yeah I guess! If they only knew those writings are what make me even think twice about coming back to jail! Just a little FYI! So here I am now, writing my last piece for the reasons I've stated above. Thank you.

(Lastly, This is my opinion, and doesn't reflect how anyone else feels. I just feel they are doin' three much (ooops, that just may be taken as gang related)... I mean doin' too much. Thank you.)

-Biscuit

From The Beat: We truly understand what you're talking about Biscuit, and while we wish you would consider continuing to write in our pages (because you have a lot of important things to say), we sympathize with your reasons for deciding that this is your last contribution. Yes, it was much better when the entire Beat was circulated for others to have access to your writings and for you to have access to the writings of others — including those other writers (BWO) who've often done the most serious thinking about life and learned the most valuable lessons to be passed on. But so far, we have failed to convince those in power of the great value of this magazine. They are in control, so we live by their rules just as you do. And speaking of you, we really hope you get your drug problem under control because you are such a gem, such a treasure of honesty, we'd hate to see you throw it all away because of some chemical that gives you a powerful but unreal boost in the beginning,

Regrets

One thing I regret doing is being locked up. I say this because if I was never locked up I would have been in the streets doing what I do. Also making my family proud. I also regret putting my family into my mess.

-Chris

From The Beat: If you would never have been locked up, you would have been out in the streets doing what you do. And what you do in the streets is what got you locked up. We think you need to do a little deeper thinking about those things you do in the streets.

Never Worth It

It's never worth losing freedom, but sometimes you just have to risk it. Like makin' money. We almost never do it the right way. It's just much easier to post up on the block and sell rocks or maybe some weed. We almost always comin' up, and that leaves someone's stuff gone.

You can't find us sayin', "All right, I'm going to jail today." It just doesn't go down like that. But we always stay on our toes. So just keep your head up because it's never worth it.

-Young D

From The Beat: You got that right! It's not worth risking your freedom for a quick come up. Plus, it's hardly ever "quick." You don't plan on going to jail, but sooner or later you get caught up. Staying on your toes doesn't stop you from ending up in jail. If you really want to stay on your toes, do the right thing. It may take longer in the short run, but it will also last longer in the long run.

Life is like
a mirror if
you frown it
frowns back
If you smile
it smiles
back

I'm Mad

I'm mad
I'm mad because he died
I hardly cried
I'm mad because my childhood was cut short
Now I'm stuck on these Newports
I'm mad because he hit me
So I stay puffin' on these trees
I'm mad 'cause I stay on this pipe
I don't know if I can get my life back right
I'm mad because he cheated
The lies became repeated
I'm mad because I love you
Now I don't know what to do
I'm mad because I want to succeed
But the question is,
Can I love you and get what I need?
I'm mad

-Jennifer

From The Beat: It sounds like you're mad at your dad for leaving you, your boyfriend for hitting and lying to you, and yourself for resorting to the unnatural boost that chemicals can give you (before they drop you down). There's nothing wrong with being mad at all these things (and people) as long as it doesn't end there. If you can use that emotion to motivate yourself, to give yourself the respect you deserve, then being mad will serve you well. We think respecting yourself means not letting anyone mistreat or abuse you, and not mistreating or abusing yourself. The value that you have does not come out of a pipe or from a cigarette. It comes from the inside, and it lasts forever.

I Think It's Worth It

I think losing freedom is worth it 'cause I would give up my freedom for any of my family members, especially for my mom because she has been there for me through thick and thin. I would do the necessary to feed my younger brother if one day something would happen to my mom. It would really be worth it to lose my freedom for someone that I really care for and really loved. It would hurt to leave them but I choose to do the things that got me locked up. But I really think it's worth it all for my family anytime.

-Bolita

From The Beat: Wouldn't it be messed up to give up your freedom for your mom when all your mom wants is that you live a decent life in freedom? Why else has she been there for you? Certainly not to see you hand your freedom over to strangers that take you from her. Even though we appreciate how much this shows that you love your mom, we also appreciate how much she wants for you and from you. Our question is, can you give her what she wants? Can you give her yourself?

Regret

One thing I really regret is what got me here to juvenile hall. Why? Because it makes me think and realize the mistake I did and be able to handle the punishment for me, to never do the same mistake again.

My punishment is being here at juvenile hall, locked up, without seeing my family or talking to them. I just regret this opportunity to not make the same mistake again and to try being the best person I can be, to not come back here.

-Tonya

From the Beat: Well, Tonya, if this experience serves as a wake-up call to get you to stop making the same mistakes that led you here, then it will be worth it. That, of course, is up to you.

The System Is A Setup

The system is bad
They want me to end up in CYA or dead
I know I made a big mistake
I don't want to go to prison upstate
Don't get me wrong, I ain't fake
Listen to the words I got to say
The system is set up for us to fail
Trip over crime and fall in jail
The streets are hot
Get yo' money and shake the spot
Look out for the undercover
Keep yo' head up and never disrespect your mother
Don't trust that girl, use a rubber
She'll set you up
On top of that she jumped in the cover with yo' brother
Life is like a mirror if you frown it frowns back
If you smile it smiles back
That day will come, until then watch yo back

-Sharky

From The Beat: There's some excellent advice in this tight poem, Sharky, but some of it doesn't go far enough. For example, protecting against pregnancy is not just the responsibility of the girl, but also of the boy who is a potential father. So it's not a question of being set up, it's a question of being responsible. If the system is a set up for failure, then the smartest thing to do is find a way to stay out of the system to begin with. We don't know if your PO is shady or not, but if you had not done the things that led you here, you wouldn't have to worry about where he or she wants to send you. If you don't give the system power over your life by messing up, then you don't have to worry about what they plan to do with you.

The Thing I Regret

The thing I regret doing is getting an abortion because I've always told myself I didn't care how old I was, that would never happen. The main reason for that is because I don't believe in them. When I first found out, the first thing came to mind was don't let my mom find out because I already knew what she was doing to say. All my life she had told me she doesn't want me to become pregnant at a young age like her. But it always went in one ear and out the other.

I wanted to keep my baby and so did my ninja. So I was going to keep it. But of course it's always a mother intuition, so she found out and everything went down the drain. I was hella mad and in pain at the same time.

So I regret doing it but maybe it was good because look where I'm at now and I wouldn't want someone else to raise my baby.

-Hyphee

From The Beat: This is a very difficult thing to have to deal with, Hyphee. Ironically, we think that just getting pregnant at your age was a sign that you were not mature enough to have a baby. So we understand your mother's concerns for you and your future. Abortion is always a difficult choice, which is why the responsible thing to do is to prevent unwanted pregnancies in the first place. Having failed to do that, you were left with only hard choices. We can't tell you that you made the right or the wrong choice. We can only point you to your own conclusion, that if you have a baby and then get yourself locked up, that's abandonment. So, maybe the pain of this event in your life will keep you from having to repeat it by taking precautions against getting pregnant again until you're ready to be a grown up, responsible mother.

Scraper Stories

Some people don't know what a scraper is, so I'm gonna let you know what it really is. A car like a Regal, box Chev, Buick, Bonneville, scraper van. Scraper vans go the dumbest. Bein' in this town, havin' a good session, ya feel me! Beat be knockin', slappin', dreds swingin' and passin' ports.

-Hyphee

From The Beat: Well, thanks for the lesson about what a scraper is. Now we have a lesson for you: as long as your focus is on that purple and that liquor, you'll be setting yourself up for a return trip to the hall. You may be writing about those scrapers, but if you're taking pride in those rippers and those drugs, you won't be driving them for too long.

Special Moments

Me and my mom would have a special moment but it's not really big to other people. But to me it is 'cause we always talk about what's going on with me. Like why I want to change my acts on what I do and how I act. I need to improve more on what I want in life. And I need to show everybody that I could do it. Get off of probation and do something with my life. So that's my special moment.

-Young Child

From The Beat: It's really nice that you have this kind of relationship with your mom. Lots of young people don't have that kind of support and care, so we hope you don't take it for granted. Getting off probation is a worthy goal, but what are your plans after that? When you say you need to improve on what you want in life, what specifically do you have in mind? What do you need to improve? How do you plan to do it?

My Biggest Mistake

First of all I want to say hi to everybody. Hi, this is Pooky, and I hope everybody is doing good so we can get out of this place soon and try not coming back, so we can do all the things we like to do.

Anyways, I'm just here trying to think one of the biggest things that I did and which brought me in here. And I think my biggest mistake that I did was starting selling drugs and not even selling, I was using too. 'Cause now that I see myself in here I not only feel bad for me but I feel bad 'cause I'm hurting my family too.

-Pooky

From The Beat: Yes, it's true that your family is feeling a lot of pain because of your bad decisions. We worry a little about your future, too, Pooky, because you say you hope you can get out of this place soon so you can "do all the things" you like to do. But aren't some of those things the very things that led you here? In other words, aren't there things that you should be giving up, sacrificing, if you truly don't want to come back? We hope you get out soon, but we also hope you don't do ALL the things you like to do.

Regret

One of the things I most regret doing is drugs. Because of drugs I disrespected my mother, and I didn't even know I was doing it. Because of drugs I lost my job and it was a hard time for me to find another one. Because of drugs I ran away with people I didn't even know that well, and they took advantage of me mentally and physically. I thought they were my friends because they were feeding me with drugs. Because of drugs I lost so much money; I stole from my mom and other places.

Now, because of drugs, I am here, locked up. I regret doing so many things in my life, but almost everything I caused my mom and on myself was because of my hunger for drugs. Now that I am about to get out, I am scared to face my block, where drugs are everywhere, because I truly do want to stop doing drugs, because I am tired.

One thing that I have learned being in here which motivates me to be good is God. He has and is helping me in here, and I am praying that He will help me when I have all that freedom out there, to stay off drugs.

-Donna

From The Beat: Your nervousness about freedom and the temptation of drugs is a sign of real maturity, Donna. If you were not nervous, we would have much less confidence in your ability to make it this time. Of course, knowing that you have to stay away from drugs and praying to God for help is only part of what you need to do. You need to stay away from drugs each and every day, and each and every day you may face that temptation. So seek out the help of others who have been through what you're going through. That could be AA or NA or a support group of your own making, just as long as you recognize that every bit of help you get adds strength to your promise. And good luck!

Why Did I Keep Coming Back?

When it was just you and me
You'd tell me you'd always care
But when there was a crowd
You'd yell and push like you couldn't bear
I wish I could have seen through your eyes
Maybe then I would know why you told me so many lies
But it's true, it's not like it was all bad
I do remember those two years,
Filled with many good times we had
However times is what turned our love to lust
Because I can't take back all those times
I cheated and lost your trust
I knew things would never be the same after that
I didn't expect you to forget,
Just forgive and leave it at that
However you still stuck by my side
But now instead of letting me know
How you felt, you'd hide
You wanted everyone to see you put me in check
But you never fooled me,
I knew you were a wreck
You acted like all you cared about
Was selling and making dough
Smoking with all your buddies,
Telling them I just a dumb "ho'e"
If that was the case
Why couldn't you just let me go?
I know I will probably never get over you
But that's okay,
Because this is something I truly need to do
You tell me if I changed my ways
You'd finally be nice
But I changed; I'm now not willing
To dedicate myself to the roll of a dice
So while we went through so much
Each and every day
You were still my first love
And that will never go away

-Jaimie

From The Beat: For all the sadness and pain in this tight poem, it's actually very sweet. It sounds like you are reaping the consequences of cheating on this man, but it also sounds like he treated you like dirt, too, at times. But then you remind us that first love is always first love. That can never be taken from either of you. Maybe as both of you mature, you'll rediscover yourselves and start over. Or, maybe this will always be a bitter-sweet memory of first love.

Hey Girl

Hey girl! My name is G
And yours must be?
Baby girl I like the way you
smile at me
Your golden brown skin, sugar
lips an' thick thighs
Baby girl you know you mine
I was with your cousin but you
caught my eye
That night we both popped a pill
Please don't wake me up, it's too
true to be real
We laid in bed the whole night
Even though we started with a
fight
Baby girl stay by my side
I promise everything gone be
all right

-Sharky

From The Beat: We don't know how you can promise anyone that "everything is gone be all right" when you're locked up and still dreaming about popping pills! You'll never really know if "it's too true to be real" since you altered reality with drugs. We definitely can understand why a good-looking young man would think about sex and love while locked up, but without thinking of more (namely, how to change those things that lead you to lock-up), you're condemning yourself to a long string of lock-ups where you'll be writing sad poems about what you don't have.

Love Is A Sensation

Love is a sensation
Caused by a temptation...
When they say they love you,
You think it's true,
You drop everything for them,
And they say the hell with you.
You stick by their side,
And they act as if you're blind,
Going about their business,
As if there's nothing to hide.
But you always go back,
And forget all his lies,
And deep down inside,
You know of all his other ties.
He acts like you're his one 'n' only,
But why do we always feel so lost and lonely?
You always got second thoughts like,
"Is he for real?"
But always go back and say,
"I guess it wasn't such a big deal."
They say, "Hugging is pleasure,
Kissing a shame,
Boys get all the pleasure,
Girls get all the pain."
They say they're not the same,
But why they always call us some off-the-wall name?
Why can't I see that you're just putting on a show?
I don't deserve to be treated like some dumb-ass 'ho'e.
It's hard to forgive,
But harder to forget,
You think you got it easy,
By always keeping me in check.
You always took advantage,
By always taking me for granted,
But now I see the danger in the sensation of love,
When I like you, I love you,
When I love you, I let you,
When I let you, I lost you.
This poem is dedicated to Richie.
You only played yourself,
And lost a good thing.

-Corrine

From The Beat: We particularly like your dedication, Corrine, because it speaks to a specific person who did specific dirt. In other words, we hope you don't lose hope about love altogether. We hope you realize that while many (even most) men may act the way Richie did, there are some out there who truly do respect women, and who know a good thing when they have it. Those are the men who will sacrifice their own instant pleasure for something worth much more and lasting much longer. We hope, even after this experience, that you're open to that possibility.

Can't Change What's Past

Can't stop life, can't rewind time
Life's a dog and then we die
We all make mistakes, but what does that mean?
Your life is shot, now you'll end up on the streets?
Mistakes are mistakes; move on with your life
Don't sit around asking yourself who, what or why
You can't change the past, I wish I never could
Without bad times, times would never be good
Living your life thinking about what could have
happened
Anything is possible as long as you're breathing and
walking
Forget about what you've done and think about what
you gonna do
Life is too short to let regrets take over you

-Pac

From The Beat: We find some of the knowledge you spit in this poem to be very important, like "Anything is possible as long as you're breathing and walking." But we wonder how well you can shape a better future if you don't think about the mistakes you made in the past. We're not saying you should obsess over these mistakes, or continuously beat yourself up, but we are saying that all experience, good and bad, is a teacher and therefore worth understanding.

Forget about what you've done and
think about what you gonna do

One Thing I Regret

The one thing I regret is coming to Juvenile Hall 'cause I miss my family and friends I miss being with them the way they use to yell at me and the way the use to tell me things about life.

I'm worrying 'cause I don't know if my grandma is going to make it. She's getting tired, I want to be there with her before something happen.

Also I miss my mom she always we buying me stuff and hoping the best for me. I just hope they let me out cause I want to go home.

-Ronnell

From The Beat: Ronnell, how can you regret coming to the Hall - was it your choice? What was it about your actions that got you into your current situation? Do you think that there was anything that you could have done differently, so that you wouldn't be sitting in the Hall today?

Misguided

First and foremost, let me start this off by sending my utmost love and respect to the few worthy on the in's and out's of these institutions. As you know, this is that one and only green eyes comin' at you from max, about to drop a few lines on this topic.

The way I define misguided, is people that can't control their lives, make choices on their own, and/or follow just to fit in. I've been in and out of this system since '99, and I ran into a lot of people that have been misguided in their lives one way or another. There are also a lot of people that try to fit in this game, once again misguided, by someone.

I see a lot of them in this Hall that I despise, not because of what they are tryin' to become but because I can separate the real from the fake — and in them, you can see the hesitation. It's not a life you just decide to jump in; it's a life style I was born in.

That's how I define misguided. The solid is gettin' fewer. The one's that know me and realize it, know what I'm talkin' about. And to the misguided in this system, I'm tired of hearin' y'all cry over your time. Don't be so easily misguided and there'll be no reason for you doing time.

This is a life you were born into, too, and as we go through these struggles, we survive — for them better days.

-Green Eyes

From The Beat: Believing what you do, probably helps you get through the time you're facing. It's a sort of artificial pride you construct to shield you from the pain your actions (in your case, just refusing to stay in any kind of placement) have brought your way. You know, to be born into the game, is to be misguided from birth. We grant you it makes it that much harder to see your way through it. It feels like it's just who you are. We know it's like spitting in the ocean to say this, but it's never too late. You deserve a better fate. And as for your so-called "fakes", yeah, we pray they hesitate long enough to see, gang banging is no way to be. If you can jump in, you can jump out!

Regret Being Here

One thing I regret is the fact that I'm in here! I mean, don't get me wrong, I take responsibility for what I have done and for the things I been doin' — but I just regret being in the system.

Some of the things I did, I had to do, because I needed to get money. So that's why I take a lil' pride in what I've done. But I just wish I could have a different consequence than this, 'cause bein' in jail is not the spirit. It makes me be labeled as a criminal. So, that's what I regret.

-Ap

From The Beat: Nah, that's not regret. You wish you weren't in the system, but you don't regret what you did? You're even kind of proud of it. Well, in a way we get it, 'cause you're proud to have earned your way — but do it legally and you can stay free!

Regret

there is nothing in this world i regret everything i do is one hundred per cent kudah black style

-Kudah Black

From The Beat: You've created a myth which you wear as a mask. We know, there is much more to you though you won't answer what we ask.

Regret

One thing I regret is all the things I did to keep comin', comin', and comin' to jail. This makes me feel angry, so I go dumb in this unit.

The first time I stepped in this institution it was very scary cause I was a new booty to this, but now I'm used to this shhh, but I'm avoid coming back, so I go to camp and pimp it and get the six months over with.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: Lil' T, regret is not always a bad thing. It can be good if it helps you to not make the same mistake more than once. As many times as you've been to the Hall, do you think this time is different? Why?

Letting Time Fly

First off and foremost, let me send my love and respect to all my loved ones. Now to this topic at hand. This is Slick, coming at ya from max, dropping down these liñas. I'm just here kicking back with a few homeboys I got here, letting time fly, watching days turn into nights.

Lately, I've just been waiting for court, to see what they say. It's been awhile since the last time I went, almost about three months. I've just been bustin' down in the yard, playing handball and all. Well, I ain't got much to touch on this week. To all, keep your head up. Till pencil meets paper. Alratos.

-Slick

From The Beat: Why not surprise us one week and tell us what you really think about this entire experience. Maybe it will be easier to do when you have a better idea of how things will turn out for you.

No Freedom

There are not a lot of things that I regret, but the one thing that I regret is getting in the trouble that brought me here. It has lead to a lot of other problems. Now I gotta worry about people checking on me, keeping track of me, and worrying about me. I don't have any freedom now.

-John

From The Beat: We regret that you wrote so little about your regret. Instead of focusing on others monitoring you, you may want to spend some time thinking about what led to you losing your freedom. How can you stay free? What can you do differently?

My Regret...

Well, I regret ever cursing at my mom. That hurts me a lot because in my culture we don't disrespect our parents. That's what I regret, and something else I regret is not helping my dad at work when I have time because that's how I feel because my dad put food on the table and put clothes on my back, so helping him makes me happy.

-Alan

From The Beat: Alan, you probably wish that those events happened differently, so, keep that in mind the next time similar opportunities arise.

Institution

Q-vo Beat! This that vato Giggles up in max now. But before I start, let me send my utmost love and respect to my loved ones. I hope y'all on your best health, you and your families! So, back to the topic: One thing I regret doing?

I don't know about that question. But something I regret doing would be drinking the night of February the thirteenth, the day before Valentine's Day. I regret drinkin' that day because that's the day I caught my case! I was really faded and caught a case. Now I'm about to do some tiempo. But what can I say? That's how life is, can't do nothing about it!

But for one, I ain't even tripping, 'cause this tiempo is gon' make me realize and make me learn from my mistakes. So it's nothing. I'll be out soon. They ain't gon' keep me in here forever. I'm gon' step my game up, and be ready for whatever.

But for now, that's the only thing I regret. Other than that, I don't regret nada. Well, I'm gon' cut these liñas short. With my respect to all you vatos doing tiempo, maintain! Alratos vatos.

-Giggles

From The Beat: If learning by your mistakes means that you know not to get drunk and go out doing stupid stuff that can get you caught up, cool! We can't even tell you how many of your compadres got caught up for the same underlying reason, whatever the charge might have been. On the real though, we know there are more things you regret doing, but we also know that a homeboy is not supposed to admit to having any regrets.

I'm Solid

This yo' boy Grimy, keeping it solid. Just been chillin'. Well, I got good news! They ain't gonna send me to CYA no more!

But I'm still going to County Jail for a certain amount of time. It's nothing. I'll be out in no time. All I got to do is be solid, like my homies in the 'hood, and stay on top of my shhh.

To my brah in the Halls, keep yo' head up high! Knock out whatever time they got lined up. Keep it solid. Stay money-motivated. I'll see you pretty soon. But I'm out with two fingers: peace out!

-Grimy

From The Beat: We cut the whole of your other piece this week, entitled "Game" where you describe a life of gang life and street crime and admit to being out of control. We suppose, actually, that's what you mean here by "money-motivated". In truth, you're headed for a lifetime of lockdown for one of those "murks" for which you claim in your unprintable poem nobody's to blame — everybody toting a gun in the game is to blame! But our point really is, when you prorate that money you got on the street, extend it out over all those years you're heading to meet — you're throwing your life away from chump change! The real money is in getting your life right and staying free for those paydays every other Friday night!

Word to the Wise

Love + Pain = Life.

-Ob'trice

From The Beat: Sounds good

I Regret Meeting The Sheriff

One thing I regret is me slanging bud at school and got caught for it. There's a sheriff's at our school and I was in the hallway. The sheriff caught me handing bud to someone. He saw that and he ran towards me, arrested me.

The reason why I did slang bud at school, because kids bring money to school, actually a lot of money. So I use to sell it there.

-No Mo' Slangin'

From The Beat: Not worth it huh? Kids bring money to Burger King too. Selling drugs costs you more than you think. Selling burgers won't cost you your freedom. Think about a new career.

Doing Good

I regret coming here too many times because I spent all my child years in the hall. I regret doing things that I done in the past. I need to work on doing good.

-Clinton

From The Beat: We want to know more. What keeps bringing you back to the Hall? Can you look at your past and think about how it has made you better? What have you learned? What good things do you want to do?

What For? Why?

one thing i regret
is getting locked up
i think about why
did i do what i did
then you wonder
damn what for why
i wish i could go back in time
and take it back
could it change

-Ob'trice

From The Beat: Yeah, things would change if you could go back in time and take back what you did. But if you went on doing the same sort of thing, it would still turn out the same or worse.

Wasting Time

What's up Beat? How ya doing? Me, well I'm going to court in 20 days, so I can get that sweet release.

I've been here since September and I'm tired of this, Man. I've wasted all of this time. It's a shame. I should have had things together by now, but I made that stupid choice and I messed up. But now it's time to get my stuff together and start a new life when I get my release. It's time to man up and get it together. I'm out. Until next time,

-Erik

From The Beat: You write that you've wasted a lot of time, but it sounds as if you have used the time that you have to really think. We want you to think about how you can avoid messing up again and making bad choices. When you get your "sweet release" a lot of the things that landed you in juvenile hall will still be there. What will stop you from doing the same things? What will your new life look like? How will you "man up"?

Unique

A unique one of a kind
At the age of nine had a corrupt mind
Straight from the hood, born to be a gee
I stay true to the game
I may be locked up, but I'm gonna stay the same.
Loved by few hated by many.

-Juicy

From The Beat: We'll just focus on the first and last lines of your poem, because the rest seem like a lot of talk for a little girl. So out of respect for you and The Beat Within we cut those b-s lines. Corrupt mind at nine. Who's fault was that? We believe, with our entire Beat heart, that a nine year old has an innocent mind even if she's seen to much, if too many bad things have happened around here - she's still a little girl. The last line, loved by few hated by many, is a hard thing to put down on paper. Being hated is not something that human beings aspire to, nor is being loved by few. So why do you state it as if it's something to boast about? Is it because it's too painful? Is it the way you protect yourself because you have been dealt a crappy hand and now you look for ways to cope with it? We think you have all the goodness and sweetness in you that you need to be loved by many and hated by few.

Get Right And Succeed

The worst thing I've done was come to jail for knocking somebody out and now I regret it, but at the same time I won't dwell on the past. I will accept that I'm in jail and get out with a positive mind and/or determined mind to get right and succeed.

-Motivation Jack

From The Beat: There is little that we can do with our past, but learn from it. What have you learned? What will you do to get right and succeed?

Isn't Life Strange?

damn isn't life strange
but you know
what is even stranger
is when it's your life
not a movie
not a video game
it's real
your life
but you wonder
could it change
could something happen
to change it
so you wonder
how come my life
is like this
is it destiny or
just by luck
and you think
it's my life
that's it
that's all
just me

-Ob'trice

From The Beat: What you habitually do, determines for the most part what will happen to you. Build good habits and, on the whole, it's like those good consequences are in your control. Bad habits though, make sure that bad consequences will sooner or later knock on your door. When, may depend on luck, but bad habits are what will always get you stuck.

Going To Camp

Well, this is it. I'm gonna go to Camp and I'll be eighteen October 2nd, 2006, so it should be easy to do what I gotta do. I'm just waitin' to go to the turf so I can take care of these problems, so here I go. I'll be home in a minute.

-Mondi Moe

From The Beat: Before you think about going back to your turf - you've got a few problems here you've got to take care of. Don't forget, you are in jail. Your going to be eighteen soon, an adult. Start thinking about your big problems. Where will you be in five years?

My Misguided Life

What's up Beat and Beat Readers? This is your boy, Lil' B, just dropping a couple of lines for those locked down. But on to the topic at hand - the word misguided means to me that a person has been brought up the wrong way or has been pushed in the wrong direction.

When I first started seeing that I was misguided when I was growing up was a while ago but I wasn't really trippin' because that was the only way I knew. Why would I change? Anyways after the years went by I started getting locked up more and more but I don't give a funk.

-Lil' B

From The Beat: You make a good point at the beginning of this piece - some of the young people we see every week talk about learning how to do the things that got them into trouble from family, friends or folks they saw everyday on the block. But you saying in the second paragraph that this is the only way you know how to live so there's no need to change is just an excuse. It's not that you can't change, you don't want to. And the road you are on rarely takes you to a place you want to be. You know this and you are the only one who can do something about it.

Regretting Everything

I regret doing all the things I ever did like taking things that don't belong to me. I am sorry for what I did. If I had the chance to change it I would.

-Santos

From The Beat: Even though you can't change what you did, you do feel bad about and that means something. There's no point spending your life feeling guilty so don't do things that will make you feel that way.

Like a Dice Game

What's up with it? I just got back, waiting to go to court to see if i'm go' get out. I'm trying to bounce back. I been down fo' a while, feel me?

If yo' brah get out, yo' brah gon' stay out, 'cause this is not where it's at! If yo' boy had the same mind-frame I got today, I wouldn't be here right now. I was playing my life like a dice game, and every time - I crapped out!

But it's only temporary. It's gon' always be greater later, brah!. To all in here, stay solid and do you, 'cause can't nobody do you better! Stay up.

-Tall Mike

From The Beat: It sounds like you've used your time instead of letting your time use you! It sounds like you've learned something that's true, and if you stick with what you've learned, your life will improve. But now, if you play along the edge of a cliff, you still might fall. It's better not to go there at all.

The Yellow Bus Kids

Why would you want to tattle/tell on us?
We go dumb, we ride the yellow bus.

Chocolate: You got me twisted
I swear, yo' life you'll miss it

Shorty: You gotta pull it together,
Whether you like it or not

Anais: We ain't never been mad
We just flick the haters off

Sophal: We on spinners and we ride around the town knocking all tattletales to the ground.

All: Yellow bus kids, we do this for fun. Ready or not, here we come. If you tattletale, then we advice you to run.

-Chocolate, Shorty, Anais, and Sophal
From The Beat: Usually the kids on the "yellow bus" are kids with special needs - so tattletalers, may in fact be doing you guys some good. If you saw a emotionally disturbed kid about to hurt himself, shouldn't you tell someone? "Look at those youngstas on the yellow bus, going dumb!"

I'm Going To Be Somebody

I feel like going back to high school and to college and being a big basketball star and supporting my family.

I want to be there for my little sister and big brother and mom and the people who were there for me. I know I am locked up and when I get out I'm going to be somebody.

-Aj

From The Beat: This may be before your time, but the G.I. Joe cartoon always ended with the phrase, "Knowing is half the battle." Years later those words still stick. It's important that you know that you will be somebody. However, that is only half the battle. You have to take actual steps to making that happen. What do you need to do to get back in school? How will you get the help that you may need to complete your studies? Being released is not going to suddenly make your dreams come true. We are confident you can move forward in accomplishing your goals, because you are somebody. Work towards being the somebody that you know you can be so that instead of writing, "I'm going to be somebody," you can write, "I am somebody."

That Regret

I regret smoking weed in the seventh grade because once I did that it was all bad! Weed led to drinking. Before all this I was kicking it with the homies. But then weed, drinking, banging, poppin' thizzels as a young teen, I no longer cared about school all I cared about was getting that chronic getting faded poppin' them Dre's my good and my man and family now I'm locked up for being drunk in public and got assault and battery on two cops I just think maybe if I never took that puff I would never even be here.

-Lil' L Mamas

From The Beat: That's quite a leap: smoking weed led you to assault and battery charges. When you look at the larger picture does it seem like a thread that began at one point (Smoking for the first time) and continues step by step? Or is it a more comprehensive picture? What you learned growing up, what your education was like, how safe your neighborhood is, what the home life is like of the friends you hang out with and the people that influence you? Was it just that first time that lead you to getting locked up? Or is there a bigger picture?

In Love With The Cops

I regret when I only had three days to get off probation and I got caught.

I regret when I had that last rock.

I regret when five-oh hit that block.

I regret when I bust that lock knock.

I regret when I threw the rock on the ground.

Every real grinder knows you're not supposed to stop, if you want to set up shop.

I regret when I fell in love with the cops.

-Maniac Black-T

From The Beat: To regret what you have done and to regret getting caught are two different things. The first means that you would not do what you did again. The second means that you would do what you did, if you didn't get caught. It sounds as if you are dangerously in love with this lifestyle. If you don't stop and if you keep shop, you will always be on the grind and you will always find yourself in the arms of the cops.

This Teacher

My worst teacher is Mrs. B. I never had a problem with any of my teachers till I came here and met her "Mrs. B." She's just so mean and rude that I can't even stand looking at her. She just seems to have so much control and that's what gets to me the most, she has no reason and makes up stuff that that's ok. I try to stay away as much as possible. So whenever I step in her class I stay to myself.

-Mrs. B's student

From The Beat: You are taking the wisest path. There will always be people in the world who will abuse what small amount of power they have. They do it because they feel powerless about everything else in their lives. You should pity rather than hate people like that.

My Love, Dedicated To Jacob

I love you baby and this is true
if you only knew,

what I really feel for you.

We've been together for a year,

still my biggest fear is me waking up and you're not near.

I can't stand when your gone, the days are long,

forever will you be mine, babe please give me a sign

that you're nobody else's and only mines.

What's up is it you and me babe

remember I'm your lady,

your love,

your mamas I'm not a runner nor ripper for sure

I'm a keeper just like you

there's so much I wanna say with very lil' time to pay

so I love you babe.

-Lil' O

From The Beat: A very sweet love ode. We remember what your first love is like. It's so powerful, it just comes up and wops you over the head. It's like the first time you taste your favorite food or listen to your favorite song, except a million times stronger. Enjoy that feeling while it lasts.

My Parents Care About Me

One of the things I regret doing is getting locked up.

I regret getting caught stealing cars

I know that I regret being locked up

because I'm making my parent mad

because I keep getting locked up

my parents care about me

I care about them.

So that's why I regret my two hits.

-Johnny

From The Beat: You are very privileged to have parents that care about you. We think that there is a difference between regret about one's actions and regret for getting caught. What decisions will you make in the future to make your parents proud of you?

The Happiest Day Of My Life

What's up Beat Within? It's me again. Jus' got sentenced to camp. The counselor just came and told me that I am leaving this week. I am ready to go. I've been waiting for about three weeks now. I am happy because I am going home at the end of this month. I've been here for three months now and I am ready to see my fiancée on the thirty-first.

It will be four months since I seen her. I miss her a lot. I proposed to her on Christmas day as soon as she woke up. It was the happiest day of my life when she said yes. When I get out we gonna start planning for it. So until next time, I'm gone.

-Lil' C

From The Beat: One of the most exciting feelings in the world is being in love. Do you love your fiancée? How did you know that you wanted to marry her? Of all the women that you have met, what makes her so special? With all of the changes that are taking place in your life right now, how will you plan for a future together?

Yo' Brown Eyes

Looking in yo brown eyes

It's like looking at the sunrise

Making me memorize

How much you make me feel inside

Making me enjoy life

You are the best thing in life to me

'Cause baby without you

I will be incomplete

Honestly D, there's no me

D, baby you will always be a part of me

Through ups and downs

Tears and smiles

We will stand

Together

Forever

'Cause this love is forever.

-Keeyana

From The Beat: Keeyana, you sure love your D. We're glad you have the words to express it. We hope he does too.

Daily Check In

What's up wit' it Beat? Me, I don't even know. This past week has been crazy. I got two more charges added on so, I go back to court on March 8th for the added charges and for my original case on April 4th.

Then on Sunday I saw the love of my life. It was somebody I wasn't planning on seeing anytime soon. I was mad as hell. But in a way I'm kinda happy 'cause at least I know he's safe here.

Well Beat that's all I got for you see you next week to all behind these boxes, I mean walls, stay up. Remain solid, see ya'll on the outs. Love always.

-Juicy

From The Beat: Thanks for the daily check in. Keep doing it, especially if it helps with your sanity.

A Life Without The Haze

What

I

regret

doing

in

my

life

was

when

I

hit

my

first

blunt

and

drank

my

first

bottle.

I

didn't

go

to

school.

disrespected

my

mom

and

did

not

listen.

That's

what

I

regret.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Drugs and alcohol often lead to trouble, especially for young people who are still trying to figure out who they are and what they are about. You put that stuff into the mix and its just chaos. But it's not too late.

Why

why did i do what i did

to be locked up in this cell

people just can't tell

that i been through a lot of hell

oh well —

that's life that i have to live

and there's always consequences

i ask myself everyday

when will i get out

at least i'm not down for life

i will get released without a doubt

i ask why

jail will teach me a lesson

but — why

is everyone's question

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: Consequences doesn't just mean eventually everyone pays for what they do wrong. It also means eventually there's a reward for what you do right. Yes, there are always (eventually) consequences, but change how you live your life and you will (eventually) see a change in consequences. If all this sounds like you'll need to stay committed and be patient if you want to see things get better — well, yeah, but we're talking about staying better, too!

Back In The Hall Again

So I'm back in the hall again. I went to court yesterday and the judge kept me cause I had a dirty pee test. But I am only here for two days and I'm gone. Hope not to come back no more and if I do come back it won't be here. I'm 18 getting ready to be 19.

-Craig

From The Beat: We don't have to say it because you already did — no more juvenile hall only the pen from here on out. So think long and hard about the things you do and ask yourself is any of this worth it?

Regret Having Sex

One thing I regret is when I was younger, when I start having sex, I feel bad that I started because now a days I want it, the worst part is that I was having sex when I got caught by the police, that's why I am in here now. Now I wish I never did that, I feel embarrassed that the police caught me. So that's what I regret.

-Shuntrece

From The Beat: Do you regret it because you were too young and innocent and in retrospect it doesn't really feel like a choice, rather than because it makes you want it now. It is common for young women who have had difficult sexual experiences to resolve them later by being promiscuous. We don't know what your story is, but it merits some reflection.

You Sure Is Ugly

Dark skin, gap in your teeth,
nappy hair, brown eyes,
you just look a mess,
shoes be old and outdated,
your pants be looking like someone made it,
damn you must shop at the goodwill,
you swear you hard and you claim you from
here and there
when will you see I don't care
you ugly on the outside and in the inside
and you a show off
but show this you sho is ugly!

-Saria
From The Beat: Imagine if someone said the same thing to you! You don't know what people have been through, yet you're quick to pass judgment. That is not very dignified.

Locked Up

... and they won't let me out!
Can't wait — they gon' let me out!
They said I changed my life.
Let 'em think what they feel. You know?
I'll never wish jail on nobody, so don't wish
it on me.
Reportin' live from Camp Sweeney, this ya
boy, Lil' E.

-Lil' E
From The Beat: Hey, you went home last weekend and came back clean. That's a major change all by itself. We didn't even know you were capable of doing that. You feel? Props.

Doin' This Camp

The one thing I regret is comin' to this janky Camp. Ya know? Thangs be hella weak! I'm tired of fake people; they talk too much up here.

But ya know I'm still keepin' my head up. Ya feel! I ain't worried 'bout nothin'. Ya know? I got too much on my mind as it is. I ain't worried 'bout all this other petty stuff. Gots to get my mind straight and focus on my goal of makin' it in this eff'd up world!

I'm solid, and I'm gonna stay solid. Ya know? Get my fam' right, my girl, patnas. We all gonna make it. We all gon' eat! Ya heard me!

-Big Chris
From The Beat: On what's right you've got to focus your mind, 'cause go back to the street grind and you'll go back to doing time — not making a dime locked up for your life of crime.

I just been coo', trying to go home to my family and the ones that love me.

Camp Life

What's up Beat? This yo' boy, Gorilla, from East Palo Alto. Well, I'm still here in Camp, just hoping to get out soon. But my PO don't tell me when I'm going to get out!

Well, I just been coo', trying to go home to my family and the ones that love me. To all the ones coming up to Camp, pimp this program. You feel me? And go home to do what you do. Well, to all in the Pen's, CYA's, Ranches, Camps, and the Halls, stay strong.

-Gorilla
From The Beat: We don't like the term "pimp" for many reasons, some more obvious than others. But regardless of how we feel, the truth is that "pimping" a program doesn't work in the long run. It means, fake it, till you get out, and then do what you've always done — which is what got you in this program to begin with! And when you come back, you probably won't get Camp. Gorilla, you have one hope when you get out, take that job from the uncle who's not a gang banger — otherwise, it'll be back to the slammer.

My Favorite Color

Red is the color of my hair
Red is the color of my blood
Red is how I feel
Red is how I look when I get mad
Red is the only color that rep me
'Cause pink is too soft, blue is too gloomy
But red is just the one for me!

-Saria
From The Beat: We didn't realize pink, red and blue were the only colors on the palette? But tell us why you identify with red?

My Grandma, My Queen (RIP)

First and foremost, let me start this wila off by sending my utmost love con respect, full-stride.

The whole point of this piece, is to acknowledge my grandma. She is my life! I just want to say, I love you, my queen, and you're never ever forgotten. You stay in my thoughts. I want you to know that I will make you proud one day — and that's real!

May you rest in peace and never be forgotten. RIP Elsie.

-Lil' C-nut
From The Beat: We feel the love and respect you send your grandmother's eternal spirit. And we read your promise to make her proud, loud and clear! You've got to take a step back from that gang life to do it though, you hear? She's watching you with love and hope. RIP Lil' C-Nut's Grandma Elsie, show him the way.

Liars and Fakers

'Sup Beat! This Heem. I about to talk about all the fake ninjas that talk a big game but really fake.

To the people that only hard when they with thei' fake lil' squad: I hate when ninjas talk like they pushin' weight, and on the outs they still walking and ridin' the bus. These ninjas crack me up with how much tickets they be selling, inviting everyone to the show, trying to tell everyone their lie trying to make it sound true until in their head they really even believe it!

All I can think about is how I ain't got time for thei' fake act. And the only time they to see me is when I'm not around. All I got to say to these ninjas is — stop wasting my time!

-Heem
From The Beat: We get as tired of these pieces as you get of that talk, but you took it a little deeper than most, especially when you point out how they tell their lies so much they begin to believe themselves. Yes! That's what keeps making so many young men cannon fodder for a game that chews them up and spits them out into the system or into a six foot hole in the ground. Of course, the so-called real ones are no better off than the fakes — 'cause they're all victims of the game. No one escapes who continues to play, 'cause: 'It ain't no game,' as they say.

Ghetto

You can take a ninja out of the ghetto, but you can't take the ghetto out of me. Boy, I'm a "G" and I gotta eat on these streets — survive on these streets, get down on these streets.

-Addicted to the Streets
From The Beat: You should have signed, "Unknowing" — because you don't seem to know that what worked when you were a BG is not going to keep working. You're old enough to eat and get up off these streets. Grind, do more time, and the system feeds you.

Don't Hate

Another day with another ninja to hate
Don't hate the play, hate the game
You shouldn't hate anyway

-Lil' Suave
From The Beat: So now, you tell us. What makes people hate on each other? What would the world be like if the hating stopped?

Regret Being A Fiend

I've been locked in this darkness for way too long
Missing the sweet sensation
Of hittin' the bong
But now I only regret it
I've been reminiscing a while
Wantin' to go and do some speed
Longing the freedom again
Not trying to be a fiend
But now I only regret it
I've been wanting to raise my daughter
Needing her more and more
Remembering her sparkling blue eyes
Now I don't need to score
'Cause she is my drug
And I'll never regret it

-Melissa
From The Beat: We hope with our collective Beat hearts that you will stick by what you say and see with equal clarity when you are out. It will be a battle to resist the temptations of drugs, but if you really love your daughter, you will. Have you ever known a speed-freak mom who was a responsible parent?

I Love You

This yo' boy, Baby Lou. I been here for six months. 'Bout to get out, you know, and do what I got to do to keep my head up. And keep it lit for all my ninjas in lock-up. It been real these last six months, but yo' boy about to do it moving.

To my big brah, DaDa, up in the Hall and 'bout to go to YA, I love you! What it up with it? This place ain't it! Some of them ninjas on the out ain't it either! But what's good, my ninja? Like I said, me 'bout to get out toward the end of this month. Ay ninja, pimp that time and don't let that place get to you.

Ninja, I just like you, and way up here, keeping it lit. But you know that's messed up what they trying to give you. Ay man, that stuff ain't cool. But you know, thangs on the outs ain't cool. Ninjas out there telling on ninjas, brah. But it's good 'cause I'm gon' do it moving.

Like you told me to pimp this time, I did. Now you telling me to go to school — and I am going to pimp that, too! I love you.

-Baby Lou
From The Beat: We know DaDa is like a big brother to you, and we're glad he gave you some good advice in The Beat about getting yourself to school every day and getting that good degree, okay? 'Cause you need to know that the life on the block won't get you anywhere but YA, the Pen', jail or an early grave. Don't just be like DaDa, listen to what he's trying to say — to be safe and stay free, get paid legally!

This Program Is Easy

This yo' boy, Lil' Chuck, up here at Camp, doing what I do best. You know! But when I get out of here, ninjas gon' be hating because I am a boss. Feel me?

But I am just go' pimp this program and do it and get it over with. This program up here is hella easy! But that's all I got for The Beat Within today. I'm out.

-Lil' Chuckie
From The Beat: Don't you understand that this program is supposed to be easy because it's supposed to your chance to change how you do and get your life right? If you go back to what you used to do — and you don't do it best or you wouldn't be here — next time your placement won't be as cool as Camp.

Going For Gold

Man, I've been at Camp now for four months and I still ain't Gold! I'm Red Two, and I still ain't went home on a Friday yet. And all my ninjas ran from Camp, and now I'm the only one of us that's pimping this program like it's nothing!

-Young Arian Baby
From The Beat: Everybody complains about all the talk up at Camp. It's a shame it has to be like that. But don't even give any of that talk the respect of a response. Major props on seeing it through there at Camp. And yeah, the program is as easy or hard as you make it — so take it easy, finish, and go home a free man.

Can I Make You My Wife?

Damn ma, what's yo' name,
The way you walkin' out the street you got my eyes gon' insane.
Check game I'm tryin' to make you my main
'Cause when you ride wit' me dough ain't a thang
I ain't gon' lie, I'm a pimp
I'm a hyphee lil' ninja and I walk with a limp
We eat lobster and shrimp 'cause money ain't shhh
Can I make you my wife or you just gon' sit here and act stuck up all night
You playin' hard to get yeah I like that shhh
I ain't gon' quit 'cause the baddest chick
You makin' me sick the way you lickin' yo' lip,
If I play my cards right
You be leavin' with me tonight
I'ma playa that's why I rolled the dice.
I cain't make the same mistake twice
I let you blow right past me like the wind flyin' a kite
So you comin' wit' me you can slide through the 'hood in that passenger seat with
Lil DV
I peeped the way you was lookin' at me smilin' at the same time
Takin' a sip of your drink.
I know you choosin' me, you just need time to think 'cause nothin' is what it seems
you probably think it's a dream, naw baby
If this ain't a dream it ain't a dream, this real life
Now can I make you my wife?

-Lil' Dv

From The Beat: It is with mixed pleasure that we finally get the chance to print one of your flows, with all their clever rhymes and unmistakable style. You've got so much raw talent. But hidden in this complimentary poem is an insult to the girl in question: By telling her that what you have to offer is your money and status, you're telling her that she's the kind of girl who only cares about that. So basically, while pretending to admire her, aren't you also implying that she's a "ho"? And if so, is that what you believe? Wake up and show The Beat and your self some respect!

What's One Thing You Regret Doing?

I will regret it when I don't do what my mom tells me to do. When I don't do it like in a hour, I feel bad that I didn't do what she ask me.

-Abo

From The Beat: Well, perhaps you should do what your mama says – in a timely matter.

I Never Had No One...

...to guide me or misguide me at all in many time in my life. So I really have just been rebellious that is all Beat.

-Lil' Temp

From The Beat: We know from your past pieces that you have a big family, and that there's much love there, complete with older brothers you looked up to. What about him? What kind of guidance (or misguidance) did he give you?

Every Step of The Way

The only thing I regret doing is robbery because now that I think about I really did not have to rob. My family was there every step of the way and now I regret it. I messed up and now I have a record and am disappointed.

-J

From The Beat: Disappointed, but also, aren't you relieved? You learned something about your family, and about robbing people, and now, soon, you'll be free. The record is not going to have to hold you back, not if you're mentally determined to take the lesson to heart.

My Worst Teacher

My worst teacher ever was in middle school he was my eighth grade teacher. He was a real racist person and I tested my theory by getting up without permission (I am black) and throwing something away.

Another person (not ethnic) did the same thing right after me, and I got tested and sent to the office. He gave me detention for not understanding a question he gave me. The teacher even class suspended me for asking a question without permission.

-H'boy

From The Beat: Man, we want to tell you how bad your teacher was, but frankly, we're too busy being impressed by the kind of student you were. You were in middle school, and you were already thinking like an amateur scientist – you came up with an idea for an experiment, on your own, and you carried it out, with discipline and scientific curiosity. That's brilliant – and it shows real intelligence inside you. Tell us, did you do well in school afterwards? Did you study? Have you ever wondered what it we be like to conduct experiments like that for a living? It's worth considering, Mr. Future-Doctor.

What One Thing You Regret Doing?

Well I regret coming here after one year and one month I came back. But I knew I was going to come back I just knew it, because I had court and I thought I was going to go back to jail but they dismissed my case and a week after I get off of probation I come back so basically I knew I was going to come back in the month of Feb. Just because I want to go with my friends and they be doing stupid stuff and I should of known because I was going to stay at my grandma till they was like come on and I went and now look at where I'm at in a place I don't want to be.

-Ja'Laya

From The Beat: Well, you can't really regret going to jail because it's not something you did – it's something that happened to you. You could, on the other hand, regret what you did that got you sent to jail. But that's your own thing.

My Worst Teacher Made Us Watch

My worst teacher was Ms. Brown when I was in fifth grade. She only let girls do everything and the boys couldn't do anything but sit in our chairs and watch.

-Abo

From The Beat: Abo, what do you mean by everything? Taking part in class discussion? Getting up off their chairs? Homework? Hmm... what about your best teacher?

Goodbye Everyone

This is to everyone at the Hall. Mad love to Yyou so stay up, this is Lil Thai Viet from this max heading to the "Y" soon so just want to put in my last words here from the 150 Hall. Thanks too much of the staff for the help. You know who you are so just hang in there at your job. I will write you guys at The Hall from the YA. Take care everyone.

-Lil' Thai Viet

From The Beat: It's been an honor publishing your work all this time, and we hope you'll be contributing to The Beat Without now that you're moving on to finish out your sentence. Remember to take advantage of every single program they offer at the Y – classes, groups, workshops, anything that can prepare you for a legit and happy life when you get out. Peace, we'll miss you!

Words to the Wise

In order to survive in life,
You gotta live with regrets.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: Survival is the lowest level of being in this world. What does it take – not to survive – but to LIVE?

It Was Rude

The worst teacher I ever had was in the ninth grade. I forgot his name but he used to always tell the class when he got mad that they wasn't going to be nothing, and that they were stupid. Some kids would laugh but I thought that was rude. And on top of that he would flunk the whole class.

Even if you did your work that semester, it wouldn't matter. Once he was mad he stayed mad and he would find any little thing to send you out of the class for nothing. That's the worst teacher to me.

-Twan

From The Beat: Ugh, that sounds like a terrible teacher to us. How can anyone learn if they're being talked to that way? On the other hand, now that you're older, and you know it wasn't your fault or the fault of the other kids, you know it's not true, right? It's not true.

The Wrong Path

One thing I regret doing is committing a crime, when I was twelve and going on probation. If I wouldn't have done that I probably wouldn't have started getting in trouble anymore.

I wouldn't have started hanging with certain people and I wouldn't have started hanging with certain people and I wouldn't have started using drugs so much. I regret doing all of these things because they started me on the path I'm on today.

-Kjs

From The Beat: Do you see that path you're on as one you're stuck on? Just the way certain decisions you made put you on the one you feel like you're on now, you can go on to make different positions and find a path that YOU want. What would those decisions have to be?

Stuck in the System

A thing that I regret doing was when I went to court on March 6, 2006. I regret doing this because even though it was wrong, it would be better than going to Juvenile Hall. What I mean is when I was going to court, I knew I was about to get locked up and get placed in a probation group home. And that is what's happening.

I could have never went to court and ran away from my recent group home, not go to court and just wait till I turn 18. I would have tried to keep going to school, if I would never have got caught by the police or my group home.

But now I am locked up until the court finds me a probation group home to live at, and who knows when that will be?

-Jayson

From The Beat: What did you run away from your last placement? Maybe if you think about all the things that led up to that running, it will help you make a plan so you don't run from your next placement. The most important thing is to work that program, so you can break this cycle and have your freedom again, right?

They Said No One Was Ever Going To Catch Me

I was misguided when I was told it was going to be OK to do stuff and nobody wasn't ever gonna catch me, if I was the way we planned.

I ended up getting caught by the cops, my mom and everyone else. That one time ended up being one after the other and I got away with a few but my luck ran out.

-Nick

From The Beat: Well that is what they say about the game: The only way to win is not to play. Or maybe it's not what "they" say, but it is what we say.

Messing Up My Relationship

The thing I regret is doing the wrong thing. That's not called for. And plus I'm messing up my relationship with my girl because she be getting mad and telling me that she don't want to be with a jailbird. I know that she won't break up with me, but I still don't want her to thinking that I don't care about her. Ever since I been locked up, I haven't been calling her that much or seen her.

-Lb

From The Beat: When you're locked up, the world just flies by on the outs, and there's nothing to do about it. We hope you get out soon so you can be with your girl, and that you stay out so you can keep her!

I'm So Lonely

I regret coming to Juvenile Hall these past years because they know I'm going to the Y 'cause I ran from thses group homes, and I refused to cut my hair so the judge says he has no other option so now I'm locked up like Akon, and ain't getting' out no time soon. "I been down so for so long, staring at these Juvy walls, "sanguin' the same old song."

-Droboy

From The Beat: There's a lot to respond to in this short piece, for example we're wondering why you kept running from group homes... but we also really want to know: Why wouldn't you cut your hair? And why was it so important to the judge that you cut it?

I Miss My Boo

What's up y'all, this Lil' Bugga. And I am ready to come back home with my Boo. Every time I began something she creep on my mind all day every day. I can't even sleep at night because of here. When I don't talk to her my day, my day don't go right at all. Every time I look at her sexy picture it makes me mad 'cause I need to be home with her right now. I wouldn't never be on here if these ninjas wouldn't be snitchin'.

-Lil Bugga

From The Beat: We've said this before and we'll say it again. You're not hear because of the "snitching." You're here because of whatever you did to break the law.

Stolen Cars Are Like Drugs

Stolen cars are like drugs because when you get behind the wheel of one of those old school Camry's.

It's a wrap,

because you get to doing hella hot shhh and that be hella fun.

-Lil' Dame

From The Beat: Hella fun? Is being locked up hella fun? How can you think it's worth it? YOU need detox. You need to realize that what isn't yours shouldn't be touched. Say no to cars!

Addicted To Syrup

My favorite high is syrup, Bolean Serious aka Promethazine with codeine. In my hood ninjas call it serious because we pay top dollar and you'll a get bust over a four oz.

Me and my ninjas drink syrup on a daily basis. I'm addicted to syrup. That's a man's best high. I'll pay top dollar on any day. I'll pay forty for four ounces, eighty for 8 ounces, 120 for 12 ounces, 160 for six ounces. That's how serious I am.

-Laron

From The Beat: What you're basically taking is a drug that makes you forget who where and what you are. It's like a painkiller for the soul - but of course when you wake up after that poison goes through your veins, whatever is causing the pain is still there? What are some of the other things you could do to deal with that? And to even figure out how to make your life itself better? Time to change up and leave the syrup! Seek help!

"Shut Yo' Mouth Boy"

My worst teacher I ever had was named Mrs. B'nett. She was my worst teacher because you couldn't explain anything good or bad no matter what it was based on. Even if you were trying to be nice or apologize. She would yell at you like you were one of her own and if you said anything to try to explain she would say shut yo' mouth boy, don't talk back to me."

-Ant

From The Beat: Yikes. How did you do in school that year that you had this teacher? Do you remember a year where you had a better teacher? And when you had that better teacher, did you do better in school too?

I Miss 'Em

Damn girl

I admit at first I jus' wanted one thang
But, I realized that seemed a lil' bit messed up
And you still let me play
Then we started goin' out

Had some problems and I was angry for a while
But we kept smoking blunts
Put some henny up in a cup

An' my problems would start to drown
But soon as that bottle is gone my problems come back around,

You took the bus' so people always around,
Checkin' you out,

But I don't care you said. They was punks,
You was even down too,

You thought I was kind of a chump,
But you got jumped

An' I was the first one there
By myself

I miss 'em all my mom and brother
Damn, I wish we was together,

But it's cool I ain't trippin'
When I get out I'll see ya'll again

An' man, I like yo' style

I got jumped, almost arrested an' you still made me smile,
It's on

Girl you the bomb
Even if we split it still be on

And down like that
I got yo' back

And even if we friends, I'll care about you and see you
Again, no matter how long I'm gone,

When I get out I'ma shine and glisten,
And be wishin',

Ya'll still love me
Damn I miss 'em,

I love all of ya
With all my heart

But we'll meet up again

-Konvick

From The Beat: You know how to rhyme, and how to express the sadness in your heart. Sounds like you've got a lot of regrets and a lot of love. Your passion for life comes out on the page, just be careful to turn your passion to the positive channel and avoid all the rage of the streets because it doesn't pay. It could be a lot worse so use this time to associate around those who want t he best for you, not the worse.

No Heart By Mr. H

The worst teacher I ever had is this teacher name Mr. H. I didn't like him because we never got along. We always got into arguments and he always kicked me out of class.

-Dj

From The Beat: What were these arguments about? Intellectual debates? Power struggles? Discipline? Tell us more why you didn't get along with Mr. Hart because we know it's an interesting story.

I Regret Plenty

I regret
smokin',

drinkin' and robbin' people.

I regret beating up people.

I regret not going to school and not doing what my Aunt tell me.

-Marco

From The Beat: Thanks for spilling your guts about all your regrets, that takes courage. Do you have ideas about what you might do to make up for all the things you regret?

Regret Poppin' Pills

I regret popping pills because when I be on I just be doing hella shhh like fighting, drinking, smoking, just doing too much. I think if I don't pop pills I would not be doing a lot of stuff I be doing.

-Lil' Main

From The Beat: The laws of physics say one thing replaces another, so it's wise to think about what you might be doing with your time/energy if you weren't popping pills. Tell us more about what those other things are!

What's One Thing You Regret?

One thing I regret is making a huge mistake by robbing somebody and thinking I would get away with it but instead I ended up here, this dirty shhh hole call Juvenile Hall.

-Lamarr

From The Beat: The biggest danger on the streets is the false notion that you won't get caught. You might not once, twice, or more... but eventually you will. The sooner you learn that, the sooner you can begin to really live.



Regret Coming To The Hall

I regret coming to YGC. I can't be with my family and my lil' girl 'cause I'm here and I wish I could be there with her and not away from her 'cause I can't see her, touch her, and I don't even know if she's all right or not. And that hurts inside not being able to see her. If she's sick I can't even be there with her to see if she's better or not and if she needs medication.

-Criminal B4

From The Beat: If your little girl is that much of an importance to you, as she surely is, then you will find a way to put her first when you get out of here. Up to now, you've put other things ahead of her (your own desires or your homies' desires), and now you're paying the terrible price of separation. The law is only taking your name at face value and reacting predictably. Maybe you should consider changing that name — or, more important, the activities that define it. That you would like to be. Being a responsible father is the hardest job of all, and the most important. Only time will tell if you are up to it. We hope so... and so does your daughter.

Nothing To Write

Y'all know this ya boy, young M Beezy. But it's cold in the halls right now. Everybody is getting locked up. Man, I'm ready to smoke some straight purp, ya heard me?

Now I'm ready to go to sleep an' go home and mess wit' some girls on a late night, ya heard? But I ain't got nothing to write about so I'm out, ya heard?

-M Beezy B4

From The Beat: When you wake up, give us a call. When you grow up, you'll get out of the hall. When you wise up, you'll find freedom and all!

Stay In School

My worst teacher was in the fourth grade. She was very mean to me. Every time I do something, she yell at me. I'll give you advice — stay an' get an education. See? Now I'm in jail. One day I went to class late. She called security and I got suspended. My mom was pissed.

-Ronnie B1

From The Beat: Was your mom pissed only at the teacher, or was she pissed at you, too? We think you've given the best advice there is. Get your education. Sometimes this means putting up with bad teachers (just like later in life you'll have to put up with bad employers, etc.), but it's definitely worth it. Plus, we know those bad teachers are balanced by great teachers, if you stick it out.

Doing The Wrong Thing

I regret coming here because I did the wrong thing to put myself in this place. I regret hanging out with the people I got caught up with because I would never be in this place right now. I regret smoking weed because that messes up my mind. I regret being in here because now I am not able to receive my letters from different colleges that are recruiting me and I am only in the 10th grade. Oregon State wants me to come out there in June.

-Quincy B4

From The Beat: Can you honestly say that you take full responsibility for your actions? If so, those many regrets should help you avoid the mistakes you've made in the past. And if you want to play college sports, smoking weed is a sure way to make yourself ineligible. It's time for you to start thinking about your future, and that means sacrificing some of the "pleasures" you now enjoy so that you can achieve your dreams.

Regret Nothing

I don't regret anything. Specially fighting in school while it was gang related. That's why I'm in here. This was my last chance too, and I came back. Well, forget it, I still don't regret it. Nothing. And to all out there, much love.

-Lil' Roach B2

From The Beat: Okay, so you don't regret anything you've done, including what turned you from a free man into a slave. We hope you start looking at your life more like an adult and less like a child, though, or by the time you realize there are things you should regret (and change), your realization will come too late, and you'll be deep, deep in the system. We've seen it before.

My Regrets

Okay, I regret going to YGC and not being there for my son and not being able to see his face every day when I could be at home with him. Now I am trying to get out of YGC. Now I am trying to do my best.

Hopefully I get court in two days. I hope I get some good news and be back with my family and see my baby boy. I hope I be in the house with my lil' Jiga and spend time with him moms and sister and the other lil' ones that I love, and even the wifey.

-DesPay B4

From The Beat: Well, we hope that you'll hear some good news too. If you do get out, we hope you cherish the opportunity to change your ways if not for yourself then for your son. We're not sure if you're strong enough to be a father — meaning, are you strong enough to sacrifice the things you like to do in order to be there for him? Only time will tell.

Regret Going AWOL

One thing I regret is AWOLing. It was boring at the group home. I couldn't stand it so I just kept AWOLing. I could've stayed and played X-Box, but I'm through game playing. But I do need to start doing good when I get out no matter what happens.

-Lil' Shotty B4

From The Beat: So, is it less boring here than it was at the group home? Didn't you just trade one boring existence for another, while adding more time to the total? You need to start thinking more like an adult, meaning you need to start thinking seriously about the things you want out of life and the things you don't want — and figure out a way to get there from here. You can no more successfully run away from your problems than you can from a group home, so it's time to turn and face them down.

Smokin' And Drinkin' Mess You Up

My regret is smoken an' drinkin', because some people do it an' regret it, like me. I regret smoking Newport and drinking, an' thizz, because it can mess up your body. That is w'at I regret.

-DeMario B1

From The Beat: Now that you know how much drinking and smoking can mess you up (both your body and your developing brain), do you plan to stop doing both when you're free to make your own decisions again. We hope so, but we also know giving addictions up can be very hard, so we hope your get help from such organizations as AA and NA so that you can return your body and mind to good health.

Regret Getting Caught, Not The Crime

I regret not throwing the cannon while fleeing from the police. But it wasn't my fault. It ripped through my coat and it was hard to reach, so sue me. I went down, got slammed for running, and now I'm here.

-Mario B4

From The Beat: You say it wasn't your fault because you couldn't get your hands on that cannon to toss. But who's fault was it that you were strapped to begin with? Have you ever thought about the possibility of what might have happened if things turned out differently? Say you did find the cannon in time to throw it, but one of the officers feared that you were about put his life in danger, so he fired at you — and he was trained to aim to kill. If that had happened, would you be saying, "So sue me?" We can hear your mom's painful sobs. Can you?

Regret Getting Mad

One thing that I regret is getting mad too easy and getting off on people like my old teacher from my school. He got in my face and I went bad on that boy and I end up in the halls and still don't get out. That what I regret. And not listen to my grands. I miss that I need to go home.

-Young Dex B2

From The Beat: When you went off on your teacher, who paid the price? Is it worth it to you to allow yourself to become a slave, to put yourself in a situation where strangers tell you when to go to the bathroom, what to wear, what to eat, when to talk, when to shower and with whom? We can predict that unless you learn to control that temper, the consequences to you will get worse and worse. This is not something you can do on your own, however. We suggest you seek help. If anger management doesn't help you, then find someone or some program that can.

That's Not Me

I've been doing things that I know something that I would not do if I was by myself. I been disrespecting my mother and hurting my friends and running the streets. That's not me.

I've been not going to class and I have been doing drugs. That's not me. I have no house or folks to call my own. Look what happened to me for not being me!

-Smacks B4

From The Beat: If it's not you who has disrespected his mother, hurt his friends, run the streets, cut class and done drugs, then who is it? Even if you say you only did what others around you wanted you to do, slowly you will become what they want you to be, and then it will be you! How can you develop your own sense of self-worth so that you feel empowered to say no to those 'friends' who "make" you do things that you say aren't you, but which lead you to lose your freedom? If you can't find a way to stand up for yourself, you'll end up holding the bag again, and again you'll find yourself locked up.

Ya Boy

One thing I regret doing is coming to jail, because I know what I was doing on the outs was not right at all. I regret that I did not go and get the real help when I needed it.

-James B1

From The Beat: Good thinking, James. What kind of help did you need, and are you getting it now? If not, how can you get the help you need? Will you be able to get what you need when you get out of here? If you know that what you were doing was not right, and you know you need help to stop doing it, then you are ahead of the game. Seeking help for a problem is a sign of maturity.

Paying With Time

I regret coming to jail, because I have been doing something that I wasn't supposed to do and I paid for it. But it's nothing. If you do the crime you have to do the time.

-Xavier B1

From The Beat: So being in jail is "nothing"? When will it become something? If you keep doing what you're not supposed to do, then we promise the system can make the time you'll be doing truly something. We hope you don't have to learn that the hard way.

My Math Teacher Never Liked Me

The worst teacher I ever had was my math teacher, 'cause he never liked me as a student, so I spoke up for myself, came up to his face, an' asked him and he got loud with me, so I hit him dead in his jaw, an' I got expelled. But I wasn't trippin', 'cause I got my revenge.

-DeMario B1

From The Beat: Hitting a teacher — then feeling proud because you got your revenge — tells us that you have some serious growing up to do. You got thrown out of school, the one place where you need to be to secure your future, and you don't regret it. We can think of no circumstances where it would be cool to hit a teacher, unless you are responding to a beating. So, you got your revenge. Who is paying the highest price for it?

Drugs Wrecked My Family

It started with my mom and dad. My mom started doing drugs and dad told her to stop and my mom would not. They broke up. I was hurt. We moved, and I started smoking weed. One day I popped ecstasy, and I passed out. My dad, he started dating other women. He had babies by two.

-Raymond B1

From The Beat: You got a bum deal because, as a child, you could do nothing to control your mother's bad choices. We're sorry you had to endure all of this, but we hope it taught you that you can control your own actions, and that only by doing so can you avoid the life your mother chose. If you choose to smoke weed and pop pills, you will go down a dark and dangerous road that leads to a very bad end. So, we hope you use your mom's example to avoid going down that road, and use your dad's bad example of what you don't want to do — making babies from different women when you can't take care of them. Get your life together. Get your education. Avoid drugs and street beefs, and create the strong, healthy family that you never had. Good luck, Raymond.

I Regret

I regret coming to jail an' now my freedom is gone. I wish I had it now. I regret doing the things I did an' I was wrong for what I did, but it was not that bad, not to me. I regret my mistakes I made in my life, an' I will never come back to jail for no mistake. An' my mistakes have misguided me, an' now I'm locked up.

I regret for my life going the wrong way, but now my life is right. I regret for not going to school, but when I get out, I will go to school an' get my education. I regret myself for not obeying my mom, but now I obey my mom more.

-Man Man B1

From The Beat: You have a lot of regrets, Man Man, and it sounds like you've learned a lot of valuable lessons. You say you don't think what you did was that bad, but it got you locked up. So how will you avoid doing those "not bad" things so you don't have to return here? Have you been locked up before, or is this the first time? If it is the first time, we can understand why you'd want to change your act so you never have to come back. But if you've been here before, what will make this time different from the last time? How will you keep your promises to go to school and obey your mom?



No Regrets

I don't regret nothing, 'cause I know that I made that decision to do what I did, so why should I regret it? And for everybody who regrets doing something 'cause something bad came out of it, like getting locked up, then you shouldn't of done what you did to get yourself in that situation in the first place. Stop crying about it and do yo' time fo' real tho. And to all doing them, keep yo' head up.

-Pinguino B2

From The Beat: True, you did what you did to get yourself in this situation but that doesn't mean you can't regret doing it. We don't really care whether you're crying about it or not, but we do care about the value you place on your own freedom. For us, putting ourselves in the hands of strangers to tell us what to do at every minute of the day is simply not worth it. Regret is not a bad place to start to learn from past mistakes. Not to regret the choices that led you here is not to regret being here. And not to regret being here suggests you're going to have to experience a lot of slave holding pens along the way. We hope we're wrong.

A Little Nothing

What up with The Beat? Me, nothing. Just posted up in the hall waiting to hit the streets you feel me. Anyways, I want to give a shout out to my ninjas at the Ranch. Well Beat I gotta go.

-G-Gutta B5

From The Beat: What are you waiting to do on those streets once you hit them, G-Gutta? We hope we don't have to remind you that it's a sign of insanity to do the same things you did before and expect a different result...

Letting Go Of My Regrets

Every person has regrets something in their life, from a little thing to something you'll never forget and you'll always carry it around until you let it off your chest. So it's always best to let go of your regrets.

-Manuel B4

From The Beat: Have you let go of your regrets? And before letting them go, did you learn anything from them? Were they the little ones, or those kind you'll never forget?

I Ain't Ever Going To Jail

One day I thought, "I ain't ever going to jail," so I used to ask my big homies and they used to tell me it was like a war zone, just so I didn't end up going. Then, one day, someone from school told me he just got out of YGC and that it wasn't shhh. So, one day I got into some trouble, but I didn't care, because somebody told me that it wasn't shhh. So, I got locked up and I got out in a few days. So, when I got out, I got a little time of probation, but I got locked up all over again.

"So here I go again," I said. I was back in here, mad as hell. It wasn't that hard, but I just didn't like the fact of being locked up and not able to do what I want. So, I was mad I was in here, not able to walk around. I wasn't able to go get at the girls. I wasn't able to so shhh, so, basically, what I am trying to say is, being locked up ain't nothing.

-Young Drewski B1

From The Beat: Do you think if they made juvenile hall even worse than it is, young men and women like you would find a reason to stay out of it? If that person from school had told you to avoid juvenile hall at all costs, would you have done it? Or would you have had to learn those things from your own experiences? Once you're in the system, it's hard to stay out, and each time you're in the system makes it more likely that you'll return. So we hope you've learned the most valuable of all lessons, and that is that the cost of freedom is acting responsibly and that freedom is worth it.

Trouble Leads To Lock-Up

I think that I regret ever getting into the trouble that led to me getting locked up and into a lot of other trouble. If I didn't do that shhh, I wouldn't have got into trouble and I wouldn't have gotten locked up, and I wouldn't be in this place right now.

-Keith B1

From The Beat: It's good that you regret the trouble that led you here, because regret is the beginning of change. Do you plan to stop doing anything when you get out? What?

Misguided People

Some people in this world is misguided by their action an' mostly by their style. What I mean by that is how their lifestyle is goin', an' mostly is how they been treated all their lives.

-DeMario B1

From The Beat: The reason we don't like you to write about all three topics, DeMario, is because you end up writing two or three sentences and not telling us much of anything at all. We don't know, for example, what you mean by people's lifestyles or what you have in mind when you see they've been mistreated. Please don't write about all three topics! Choose just one, and write in more detail about it. Quantity doesn't count for much in The Beat, but quality does, and you can't write with quality unless you fill in the details.

Regretting The Hall

One thing I regret is coming to juvenile hall because they treat you like animals. If we was on the outs they wouldn't talk to us like that. Man, I can't wait get out the halls to be with my family. I can't do juvenile no more I can't wait to get out.

-CJ B2

From The Beat: Right, if you were on the outs they couldn't talk to you like they do. So why did you allow yourself to be taken from the outs and put into a cage? Getting out of here is the easy part, CJ. Staying out takes more work and requires a decision to stay out. Have you made that decision?

The Big Mistake

I wish I could get out of here. This juvenile place is like hell. I regret coming to B2 and meeting this guy name Counselor. Counselor is like a demon from hell. It's like he came to earth and torture the kids in B2 like we some kind of wild animal. To me I think he need to spend a long, long, long time with a woman. He say "I love you like my own son". That's some beep beep. We need help. Call the NWA. Somebody, anybody just please help us.

-QP B2

From The Beat: Your wish is in your own hands QR. You have to be the one that helps yourself because all the complaints about how you're treated in here won't change the reality of lock-up. The only thing that will do that is to avoid it in the first place. So, what's your plan for holding onto your freedom once you have it again? If you don't make a plan, someone will make it for you.

Regret Doing It

Wassup Beat? This Young Jeff up in San Francisco YGC and I'm talking about this topic, "What's one thing you regret doin'?" The thing I regret doin' is one day it was me and my homies and our enemies pulled up. At the time my homie had a gun, but he didn't want to shoot, so I volunteered because I wanted to show my homies that I'm down wit' the set. So he gave it to me and I started bustin' wit' one hand and out of nowhere my wrist started burnin'. I woke up the next morning and went to General Hospital and they said some bull like I cracked something in my wrist but they didn't do nothin' but do x-rays, wrap my wrist and gave me pain pills. But I regret that moment because my wrist still hurt till this day and it happen a year and a half ago.

-Young Jeff B2

From The Beat: The fact that you took that gun to impress your homies (and the fact that the only thing you regret about it is that your wrist hurts) tells us that you have a lot of growing up to do. Your homies were using you because they knew you were still thinking like a child, and children are easy to manipulate, to make them do what you want done. All we can say is that we hope you grow up, and soon, because you may not be so lucky the next time. If you shoot and hurt or kill someone, you're handing yourself over to the system and saying, "Ok, please make me your slave." If you get shot, well then... Maybe someone will write you a nice RIP.

Think Before Regrets

W'as up Beat? You know who it be, it Young B. But it cool 'cause I'm trying to get my shhh together. I'm trying to get my GED so I can go to college and get a good job so I can take care of my mom and my sister. I want to go to college so I can do something with my life, like play basketball or something like that.

What my mom always say, "You have to think before you do something that you are going to regret." So now I'm sitting here mad at myself 'cause I did something stupid to get myself here. So from now on I am going to do what I have to do to get what I want. So to all my people out there, stay up!

-Young B B5

From The Beat: It would be your best bet to go ahead and put them streets to rest and bring your education to life starting with achieving your GED. If you were to put all the energy that you put towards whatever got you in jail into your education, you'd soon achieve your goals. If basketball is your thing, stick with it even if it's just something to do to keep you busy. Don't disappoint your mom — and yourself — again!

Misguided

I've never been misguided. Everything I do and every thing I've ever done was on my own and doesn't have to do with anyone else. No I've never been misguided

-P-Boy B5

From The Beat: We know of no human being who has never been misguided. You may not be willing to talk about being led down the wrong path by anyone else, or you may not even be aware that it happened, but you can't go through life without being influenced by others for the good and for the bad. You did not grow up in a bubble. We wish you had given this topic a little more thought before you tossed it off so casually.

Running Leads To Regrets

I regret a lot of things in life, but the one thing I regret the most is running away from my group home and not finishing up my program when I only had only 30 days left. I messed up my chances to going home. So now I got to go to another program, in Colorado for six months to a year and I don't want to go... that's too far.

-Uptown Princess GU

From The Beat: We're curious what you were thinking when you risked so much for so little (and lost). Did you think you wouldn't get caught? Or did you think that even if you did the price would be worth it? Well, is it? One of the differences between children and adults is that adults are able to put off satisfying their desires if it's in their long-term interest to do so. Children, on the other hand, want what they want right now, and to hell with the consequences. We hope that Colorado will help you mature.

Bed Time

Every night I go to bed
I dream about the days ahead
The possibilities that are out there for me
I'll see the world, and sail the seven seas
I'ma be who I wanna be, I am be me
And I'ma do what I do I'ma do E
I'm in here missin' shhh
Looking at the clock as the time goes by
Looking at the sky as the day goes by
Looking in the mirror as my life goes by.

-Timmet B2

From The Beat: You know, Timmet, you might think about taking some of that time you spend (waste) looking at the clock, and look deep inside yourself. The mirror only reflects what's on the outside, but unless you examine what's on the inside and make some important decisions about future choices in your life, you won't be able to do the things you like doing because you'll keep giving your freedom up to strangers. That is the consequence for doing E, for example. So, if you're willing to accept being a slave, then go ahead and do those things that strip you of your freedom. If you're not willing to be a slave, then you'd better conquer some of your own addictions and actions.

Back To The Block

W'a's up with y'all? This is Mafioso and I regret that I didn't listen to my mom and my case manager. Now look where I'm locked up again because doin' stupid shhh like always. But I can wait to get out to come back my block and kicking with the homies and mess with my girl. Aight then, late.

-Mafioso B2

From The Beat: It's better if YOU look where you are AGAIN, because by telling us that you're going back to the block to kick with the homies you're saying that this place is going to be your home-away-from-home. You can't keep doing the same things (even hanging with the same people) and expect different results.

Freedom

Freedom is what everybody wants. But most people when they get their freedom they can't keep it. I sometimes feel like I'm still a slave because it's so many things that I want to do but can't. It's not that I can't, it's that it's all these laws that say you can't. Then when you sit in the system you got all these POs setting traps trying to keep a ninja trap in a cage called a cell like a wild animal.

I'm not trying to be in no cell behind a lock door. When I'm on the outs, I do good till I try to go back to my old way. I only go back to my old ways when I fall into one of them traps. Now I'm not trying to go back to my old ways.

-Gues B2

From The Beat: You don't have to be in jail to be doing time. Freedom is a state of mind and spiritual balance within yourself. If you find that balance, you'll find a way to stay out of here. But instead, we see a rather unbalanced view that finds fault "all these laws," and with "POs setting traps," but not with yourself for giving the PO that power over you to begin with. The key to your cage is education. Arm yourself with knowledge, then avoid the traps that you so clearly understand can lead you here.

My Worst Teacher

My worst teacher was my 6th grade teacher because she was hell a mean. She'll kick me out for the littlest stuff and always giving me detention and sending me to principal and putting shhh hell a thick so I'll get sent home or something.

-Uptown Princess GU

From The Beat: Why do you think she was so mean? Did she treat everyone unfairly, or did she just have something against you? Did you do anything to contribute to her meanness?

Respect

Respect to me is honor. You have to show me respect to get respect. I got respect in many ways like with my parents and my friends. Respect is also trust because if I ask you to do something and you do it, that's showing you have respect. It's also powerful because people can use it for hurting people or sometimes hurting yourself. So respect others so you can get respect 'cause when you have lots of respect then you are honored.

-E B2

From The Beat: Before you do anything, respect yourself first. If you respect yourself, you'll know how to stay out of this place, how to help your family, how to help yourself, and how to make your future better. People try to do every and anything to get respect, when all they really have to do is begin with self-respect.

I Fear No Man

Tears with years
No letters from peers
Holdin' it down within black top
Praying to God to get me out of here
But I'd do it again
Locked down wit' the homies
'Til the end
I told my mom
I would never shed a tear
With years
I fear no man
Even if I'm locked down in here
I've been running from the shadow of death
I feel like death is near
But only the strong survive
But my last breath is near
To be continued

-Michael LCRS

From The Beat: Why do you suppose the letters are not coming your way from them peers? Who is writing you? Are you writing? Remember, to get a letter, you too need to write. Besides praying to get out, you need to do some soul searching and preparation. What's your plan? We hope it's not about giving up. Why did you tell your mom you wouldn't cry? So what if you cry? Cry! Grown men cry. And grown men have plenty to fear. Leave the tough guy image when you write and come from the heart with your true feelings! Lastly, what's up with death and your thoughts that it's near? How old are you? If death is in your equation, then you truly need to do some soul searching and come to better conclusions about your life. There is a better and brighter road to take, you simply have to have heart to make the choice. It's not as hard as you think.

Keep It Real

I keep it'real. I don't regret anything. Everything I believe happens for a reason fo' real. Not only does it happen for a reason it makes you the person you become. Even in juvenile I am proud to say that I'm proud of who I've become. Until next time we meet, this is the sounds of The Beat.

-Chill Will B5

From The Beat: Do you actually take pride in being pimped by a system that makes money off your mistakes? You say you're proud of the person you've become, but you don't tell us what you've become? Can you enlighten us?

It's All For A Reason

On mistakes I have made a few you dig but I don't regret any of it because everything happen for a reason.

-Tru B B5

From The Beat: Since you don't have any regrets, would it be safe to say that you don't mind being in B5 under control of another person, and can't do anything about anything, not even to be there for those who may need you?

RIP Lil' D

What up? My name is Lil' C. I want to tell you about my cousin Lil' D. Man, he was my life. Now he is not here. But I am trying to do cool, but you know it's hard to be a ninja on the street.

-Lil' C B5

From The Beat: We read far too many stories of tragedy like this one in The Beat each week. We're sorry you lost your cousin. What made him so special in your life? What are you going to do so that you reduce the possibilities of following in his footsteps? We hope you know that Lil' D will continue to live through you as long as you stay alive.

This Time

This time I don't feel so bad because I turned myself in so I can get this over with 'cause I don't like comin' here. I just wanna change my life so I can get on with my life and be the basketball player that I am.

-Paris GU

From The Beat: The fact that you turned yourself in tells us that you are growing up. What we hope for you is that you mature even more so that you can fulfill your dream of changing your life in order to play ball. Do you want to play college ball? Be in the WNBA? What?

From Rocks To Lock-Up

I'm 17 1/2. I will be 18 on the 9th of March. Today I went to court and found out that I might be going to CYA. As I look back on how I got in this situation I asked myself was it worth it all? I ask myself was those rocks worth it? I mean for the love of money, but all money ain't good money.

-Rachel GU

From The Beat: Do you mean that you don't already know the answers to the question, "Was it worth it?" If you don't know that your freedom is worth more than the chips you stack, then you're predicting a future of lock-ups (when you're not stacking anything but days on days). Is there anything you value more than money? What? How can you get what you value without losing your freedom or your life?

I Should Have Stayed Home

I regret going to school 3/4/06 because that day a teacher lied on me and said I hit him. That got me a felony. That what I regret. The worst teacher I've ever had is the teacher I currently have now because I've never had a teacher lie on me and get me in a great amount of trouble like the teacher I have now. The teacher I am referring to got me two felonies just because he wanted to look good and keep himself outta trouble. But, in all reality he got me in an amount of trouble that I can't run away from, and I don't appreciate that.

-P-Boy B5

From The Beat: Sorry, but we had to take the teacher's name out of your piece, both to protect him and to protect you. We wish you had filled in a few more details in this piece for us. For example, what does it mean that he lied on you just to look good? Who did he need to look good in front of? Why did he pick you to lie about? What really went down between you and him that caused this unfortunate event to take place? Do you have any responsibility here at all, or is it all on him? Answering some of those questions would have made this a much better piece. It's all in the details.

Thinking About Him From Jail

I think about you all the time 'cause you're my man and you're so fine. Every time when I'm in jail I wonder about you and your smell
By your wife
Love,

-Yesenia GU

From The Beat: It sounds to us that you like jail more than you like him, because you keep coming back. That means that whatever you do to bring you here is more important to you than he is (and even more important to you than you are, because you keep allowing someone else to tell you what to do and when to do it). Love is more than words, Yesenia. It's deeds. So, why not start by loving yourself — and keeping yourself free!

I'm Mad

Dear Beat Within. I mad right now. Somehow I m not going to right that much. I have been up in here handling my business. I should be getting out soon. I m sick of this shhh.

-Lil' Rah-Rah B5

From The Beat: Really, you're not handling your business at all. You say you're sick of this shhh, but you keep doing things that either keep you here longer or put you back as soon as you get out. So, are we to believe your words or are we to believe your actions? As long as you're in trapped here, you're only handling someone else business, a business that makes a lot of money for a lot of folks who are grateful to you for messing up. Being mad doesn't make a difference, but setting goals and being wise about achieving them does make a difference. Do yourself a favor by coming up with a blueprint that will keep you on top of your own business, which is your life.

If I Only Was Not Drunk...

One thing I regret is beating up that guy on the train. That's what got me in this bullshhh system. If I just was not drunk and high I could have focused more. That thought is haunting me or this regret is haunting me day by day.

Sitting in this cell with nothing but thinking, it's feels like I'm using 20% of my brain. I just ready to do this program and get on with my life, period.

-Dwayne B5

From The Beat: If you used the other 80% of your brain to figure out how to discipline yourself and take control of your life, think of how much you could accomplish! As we have told you before, we think you need to put a lot of energy and focus on the problem of drinking. Because of drinking, you lost control and did something that put you in the hands of this system. You are better than that. But alcohol abuse can be a very difficult condition to fight alone, so we hope you reach out to those organizations and people willing to help you conquer this one. If you do, we see endless possibilities for your successful future.

I Regret Gun Violence, But...

On thing I regret doing is using fighting and gun violence to solve my problems, and I regret selling drugs as a way of life. Although I regret it, I also have reasons for doing what I do so I know if I get took down I can handle mine. Most ninjas can't.

-Flav B5

From The Beat: We're a little confused, Flav. You say you regret fighting and gun violence, but then you defend your use of that same violence as proof that you can "handle" yours. How can you have it both ways? How can you both regret and defend the same practice? This is one of the problems we see with a lot of our young writers who recognize that the path their on leads to destruction (for themselves as well as for others), but who want to continue on that path. As far as selling drugs is concerned, we're not sure if you're also justifying that too, but we'd love to know your thinking on that single subject, and what it does to your community. Do you plan any changes in the way you live your life when you get out of here? What?

Regret Getting Into The System

I regret getting myself into the system because when you get in it's hard to get out. I been on the run for a long time and I ain't did shhh but dug a bigger hole for a myself because now they trying to send me to the Ranch. If I would've just went to school and stayed to myself.

-Lil' AJ B2

From The Beat: The only value of "if only" is to guide your future. Whatever mistakes you made that got you locked up (and not going to school is one of the biggest mistakes you can make) can't be undone. But if you avoid those mistakes in the future, then this time you're giving to the system won't be wasted. If you would of went to school and stayed to yourself you would of probably would been better off; who knows? Once you're out of here (and the Ranch), please come anew and stay away from the holes that you dug for yourself.

Nothing Happens For No Reason

Well, let's see. I'm going to say like this: sometimes I do regret doing things when it happens. When I really think about it, I don't regret doin' what I do, because it happens for a reason. Nothing happens for no reason. Like me, I don't do nothing for no reason.

Someone messes with me, I'm going to do something back. If you don't mess with me, then Ngo won't give you the consequences and Ngo don't give a damn you Black, White, Chinese, Vietnamese, Latino and whatever. You coo' with me, I'm coo' with you. You mess with me, I'm gonna mess you up.

Yeah, you know who this be, Ngo, just writing in The Beat.

-Ngo LCRS

From The Beat: Among many cultures, people love to tease each other and they consider it funny and almost an art to insult people cleverly. While you're at the Ranch surrounded by guys of other cultures, why don't you see if they aren't playing with each other when they seem to criticize each other and put each other down? Doesn't everyone laugh, including the person insulted? Maybe you can lighten up, when someone plays with you, and see if there isn't a lot of affection in it.

Misguided

"Misguided" is when I do something wrong at the wrong time, and something bad starts happening. Real bad. It could be if I go somewhere walking and the cop can think that I'm doing something.

-Niota GU

From The Beat: This is the beginning of what could be a really good piece, but it's too short for us to understand what you are really talking about. Can you give an example of being at the wrong place at the wrong time? Are the cops ever right about their assumptions? In other words, do you ever give them reason to arrest you?

I Regret Being In San Francisco

I regret being in San Francisco with some friends somewhere at the wrong time. If I wasn't out here then that would have never happened that night. Just because I was walking, looking for my friends they thought I was out there prostituting on the corner when I was not doing that. I was just kickin' it in San Francisco.

-Niota GU

From The Beat: That "wrong-place-wrong-time" stuff can have deadly consequences, so we hope you are careful where you go and with whom. But is that the only thing that you regret in your life?

Hard Life

When I wake I be tired. Then when I get to school, teachers talk and talk. My head full of rocks in my head. My heart is booming and booming each second. My lips is all dry like raisins. My nose full with school smell. The teachers is screaming their breath out.

My eyes like a heavy apple when I think swords is stabbing my brain out. The time is moving like a turtle. My throat is gone. When I eat, my taste buds is dead, like a rat. When I walk my feet like rocks so I can't walk. That is sickness.

-Baby Girl

From The Beat: Yes, it sounds like a sickness to us, Baby Girl. You have listed a lot of serious symptoms, but we don't know why you're feeling this way. Is this just you being sick of everything, or are you describing real physical symptoms? You make it sound like you get no pleasure in life at all. We can't believe that. Do you always feel this way, or do you have some wonderful times in between (like on the weekends when you don't have to go to school)?

Stupid To Smoke Weed

When the lights go out, I just go with my cousin and see them smoke weed. But I just think to myself they are just plain stupid because they are messing up their health.

-Tony

From The Beat: We hope you never forget just how stupid it is, and how stupid they look when you see them smoking weed. As you get older, lots of people will try to tempt you to do those kinds of stupid things that ruin your health, so you have to be strong so that you can say "No." We've enjoyed having you in this class, Tony, even though we wish you would take it a little more seriously and write longer pieces than two sentences! (And when you fall in love with that Chinese girl, we hope you invite us to the wedding...)

Spoiled

My family always say I got my nose on down from my mom and my nose on up from my dad. They say I have my auntie's body. I have my daddy's family's shortness.

But what's me is my personality. My spoiledness is from my mom 'cause her daddy always spoiled her. I guess I am more like my parents than I thought I was. My hair is like my mom's. My personality is spoiled.

-Lil' Lover

From The Beat: Isn't it interesting when you start examining yourself to see how much you resemble both of your parents. Is your nose from your dad or your mom? What's an example of how you act spoiled? Do you like being spoiled? Do your friends think you're spoiled?

I'm Tall

I'm tall because my grandpa's family is tall. What I hate is that the sun is always in my face. that's what I hate, being in the sun always.

-No Name

From The Beat: We THINK we know who wrote this (because we know who is tall in the classroom), but you would have made it easier if you put your name on what you wrote! We never thought about the sun being more in your face when you're tall. Are there things you like about being tall? When you're at a basketball game or a parade, isn't it easier for you to see than it is for shorter people? You forgot to tell us whether the grandpa you're talking about is on your father's side of the family or your mother's.

My Dad's Intelligence

I am getting detention. My dad never had that much detentions, or doesn't have. My mom? I got her eyes, and from my dad I got his intelligence. My face was from my uncle. I got my height by my mom, and for my funny, I got it from my dad. For the color of my skin and my hair...

From The Beat: We have no idea who wrote this because you didn't write anything that would help us to identify you. And then you left us hanging at the very end... The color of your skin? The color of your hair? From dad or mom? Oh well, we'll never know! (And by the way, why are you getting detentions?)

Me

I look exactly like my mom, only she is a little bit more lighter of the skin than me. I don't really look like my dad, only the color of my eyes. We both have them dark brown, but my mom has light, really light eyes.

I also look exactly like my brother, only he is a little shorter than me. They used to think we were twins, but he is nine and I am eleven. He is a little bit darker than me. he has the color of skin of my dad.

But I am special because of my attitude. And I'm the only one who just doesn't care sometimes.

-Sweet Heart

From The Beat: Thank you for answering the questions posed in the topic. We get a nice picture of your mom and dad from reading your description. But we're a little confused about that attitude of yours that makes you special. Can you tell us something about that. Why do you think you just don't care sometimes? What does the rest of your family care about that you don't? What do you care about?

In The Dark

When the lights go out, you scream. The Boogie Man...

When we went to my house, the lights went out and I got scared. I was telling my brother to try to get electricity back with his material he got from school. that day I was telling my brother I know how to use electricity and make some, too. It is really difficult when you try to make lightning. You need to do a lot of things, and then you have to have light bulbs. All the materials that you need, these are often in cars or often in light bulbs.

When the lights go out you get so scared you don't know what to do and you get really scared that you almost pee on your pants.

The other thing that you do is that you get really scared and you scream. When you see the lights go out you don't know what to do and you scream. Some people are like that and when you see the lights turn on you just scam and when you are small you don't know what to do and you get freaked out.

When you see the last soup in your house and the lights go out, you fight just to get the soup. When you put some light bulbs in, you are my best friend. And when you can' collect any light bulbs you also can turn on the flashlight.

When the lights go out in my house, I go running to the room and I get my small tent and I go in there. It makes me feel better. I always do that when the lights go out. I do not get scared. I just go in there and I turn on my camping light. I am not scared when I got all my materials because my tent is already built. I got my blanky in there, my pillow, and I always sleep in my tent with my teddy bears and my pajamas.

When the lights go out I always give the phone to my brother and he calls my mom that something bad happened, that is that the lights went out. And my mom tells them get your tents and I will be there in time.

-William

From The Beat: We really like this piece a lot, William — but we wish you would take a little more time when you write, because your handwriting is difficult to understand. When the lights go out, do you have to set your tent up, or is it already set up in your room? Do you ever take your tent outside to sleep? Have you been camping with your family and your tent? What else does your tent have in it besides a tent light? Do you sleep in a sleeping bag? Do you ever have your friends to sleep over in your tent? What color is your tent? How many people can fit inside? Anyway, thanks for this long and well-written piece, and thanks for all your writing for The Beat.

Drowned Rabbit

My nephew always threw his rabbit in the pool. The rabbit got out after a five-minute swim. Then one day, poor rabbit... One day my cousin saw him going to drown him. He jumped with the rabbit in his hand and held him down.

-Scarface

From The Beat: We don't like this story, Scarface. We don't like cruelty to animals because that makes it easier to be cruel to people. It's easy to hurt something smaller and weaker than us. We hope you would never do something like this. And we also hope that you won't be so lazy when you write! You have a lot of things to say, but you didn't take advantage of The Beat to say them. Maybe next time...

Handsome But Tough

I got my looks from my pops. I got my toughness from my moms. I got my eyes from my dad. My mom knows how to fight for protection. My dad got that nose that's smooth and that's what I got.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: So is your mom tougher than your dad? What makes her so tough? Did you get all your looks from your dad, or are there parts of you that resemble your mom, too?

My Annoying Past

I had an annoying past at my other school. I take everything seriously, but some people think I don't, and sometimes people think they're all that. That's what makes me really pissed. Some people don't know about a midget's feeling, and it's all about anger, trust me. I know. I am one. I got the strong anger, and instead of hurting someone, I hit a wall or a fence to take away my anger. I better have a new attitude and a new school.

-Vader

From The Beat: Well, we can see how you could benefit from a new attitude. After all, when you hit walls and fences, it's you that feels the pain, not the wall or the fence! But why do you need a new school? Are you talking about EPA Charter, or the other school you used to attend? What are you doing to work on your temper so that you don't give yourself more trouble than it's worth?

Good Looks, Good Humor

Well, I get a lot of my characteristics from my mom. The eyebrows. The really dark brown hair. I get most of my features from my mom, but a lot of my personality from my dad.

My dad is very humorous and so am I. But my dad loses it easily and I don't, so you can see I am a literal mama's boy. So follow your heart, the Beat Within.

-Mama's Boy

From The Beat: It sounds like you took the best of both sides of your family — good looks from your mom and good humor from your dad. By the way, when you say "follow your heart," what do you mean? Where does your heart lead you?

Fruits Basket

I love Fruits Basket. My favorite character is Yuki and Kyosohma. I like Yuki because he's kind-hearted. I love Kyo because he's violent.

-Manga Anime Fruits Basket

From The Beat: We sure wish you would write longer pieces, but since this is our last workshop, I guess we'll never get to see those! We want to thank you for always participating in class, and practicing on us to drive us crazy like you want to do to your future editor! We hope you get to visit Japan one day. It is a beautiful country.

Playing Without Electricity

I think it would be pretty easy if all the electricity went out. I do most of my activities without electricity. That is why I think it would be easy.

The activities I do most is soccer and homework. But mostly I play soccer because, you know, it is my dream. I would cook on my solar oven if the sun comes out. At night I would just hold my hunger. At night I also would just lay on my couch and talk with anyone that is close to me. I might even be able to survive like this for the rest of my life.

-Ronaldinho

From The Beat: Do you mean you could survive on your couch for the rest of your life? Would you be willing to give up the TV and the computer and the Play Station and...? It sounds like you do a lot of outdoor activities that don't require electricity. Plus, you know how to cook without it. Maybe you could survive like that for the rest of your life! Of course, if you're playing those night soccer games when you're a pro, that requires electricity!

Heart Break

Love can make you feel good, happy and carefree. But once your love leaves you, you feel alone, empty and scared. Your heart has been broken. You feel that there can be no repairs. Then the right person comes along to help you mend your wounds.

You try and try, but your heart stays shattered and broken. You may never love again — not the way you have before... never again 'cause you been hurt and now you're heart broken

-Smax

From The Beat: We've missed you and your writing in The Beat, Smax, but this is a very sad piece. It sounds like you've had some bad luck with love. But we're here to tell you that everybody goes through both bad and good experiences in the love department, so we hope you won't let it get you down. We're sure that you will find love again, and that it will be even better than the love you lost. Still, we're sorry you've been hurt. You deserve better.

How Come?

How come you're never home
How come your kids call me mommy
When that's what they should call you
How come your family don't claim you
How come your kids are doing bad in school
How come your son was held back in kindergarten
And in the 1st grade can't read
How come your daughter is five years old,
But walks, talks and acts grown
How come your father is washing your boyfriend's clothes
How come you do what you do
Please tell me
Fill me in... I'll help but I need to know
Please tell me
How come

-Smax

From The Beat: These are all very interesting questions, Smax. But since you didn't tell us who you were writing to or about, we're left with a lot of questions ourselves! Who is this person? Do you have any answers to the questions you ask? We'd like to know. Anyway, welcome back to The Beat. We hope you inspire others to continue writing for us even after they leave the workshop.

My Man

He's my man
Last year it started
Last year it began
I love my man
If he leaves don't cry (Boo-hoo)
'Cause there's no reason to
He'll be in good hands
'Cause he's my man

He's man man
I'll roam the land with my man
Walking hand-in-hand
It'll be grand
I love my man
And he loves me
When I see you all lonely
I'll laugh (Tee-hee)
'Cause with me
'Cause he's my man

He's my man
So back off girls... just know
He's mine fo' sho'
He don't want chu, boo
So leave him alone
And I won't have to break your backbone
He don't want you
'Cause he's with me
'Cause he's my man

-Smax

From The Beat: We're a little confused, Smax. In one poem, you are crying about a broken heart. But in this poem, you're warning other girls to stay away from your man or you'll break their back! So which is it? Are you heart broken, or are you not? One thing your pieces show is that The Beat is always open to our Beat family. Even though you are no longer in the workshop, you can always write for us. Thank you for that!

A Very Calm Sportsman

When I was little, always all the people tell me that I was just like my mother because she is very calm, and to my father because he likes a lot to play sports like soccer, volley ball, tennis, or to go and climb the big mountains. They tell me that my brother and I are twins, but he is three years older than me. He looks smaller or the same age as me. I don't like when they tell me that I look like my sister because she always angry with me, but we have something in common, that we both are very smart.

-Ronaldo

From The Beat: It sounds like you inherited the best qualities from both your parents. What makes you and your sister so smart? Does your brother like to be told that he is your twin? Do you ever climb mountains with your father, or do you just play soccer? Well, thank you for all your fine writing in this class, and we will look for you in the professional soccer teams in the future!

Forgetting The Past

I try to forget 'bout the past, but I can't. I try to forget when I was being messed up to my homies and my family. I tried to forget the boys that I went out with. I tried to forget the bad days that I had. I tried to forget it, but it's hard.

-Lil' Munchies

From The Beat: You have a lot that you want to try to forget. Why is that? What about those boys do you want to forget? What made those days bad? Are there other things that you try to remember? Is it easier to remember or to forget?

Back Then!

Back then, my life used to be cool. But when my big brother used to go out with his friend, he was a bad boy. He started drinking, smoking. He used to get mad when I used to tell him why did he smoke. But now we cool

-Lil' Shorty

From The Beat: Did your brother stop smoking? Is that why you're cool now? Why do you think he got mad when you asked him about his smoking? Maybe he knew he was wrong and didn't want anyone to remind him. We sure hope you never start that bad habit because it's hard to break. And it's really bad for your health!

Necesitamos A Nuestros Padres

Mis pensamientos son que uno nunca deja de necesitar a un padre o a una madre. Ese amor nunca se va a terminar porque ese amor entre padre e hijo es in principio de amor de familia, y más que nada es un amor santificado que se formo desde que el mundo se empezo a formar.

From The Beat: ¡Que linda expresión Luis! La verdad es que nuestros padres siempre van a querer a sus hijos más que a nadie más.

Mi Papa

I have a dad — at least I had a dad... I look like him. We have the same eyes! We have the same nose, and also the same skin tone! But he's not here. I never saw him! Bt whatever happens, I will always love him!

-Black Panther

From The Beat: It's sad not to have a father in your life. But how do you know that you have his eyes, nose and skin tone? Do you have photographs of him, or did your mom tell you that you look like him?

When The Lights Go Out

When the lights go, that is why you have to have candles. But you need to have fire to make some, or have a flashlight as you go outside 'cause you don't have power sources.

If I play Play Station 2, the energy of the PS2 goes too high and wastes all the time you play for four hours.

-C-Dog

From The Beat: We have never played the PS2. What can you tell us about it? How many games can you play? Which ones do you like? What makes you a good (or bad) player? Could you play your PS2 if all the lights went out?

Blackouts

When the lights go out in my house, it's called a blackout and we were not able to open the fridge or play Play Station. And that's why I did not like it when we had a blackout.

The good thing about blackouts is that we used to play in the dark and I used to scare my brother. He used to punch me in the face... that's how scared he was! The other god thing is that before the lights went on when there was a pot of soup, me and my brother would run and punch each other go get the last of it.

The bad thing is that sometimes there used to be hot pockets and he used to beat me to them! Those were all of the good and bad things I can think of. I still got more to say, but no, I don't want to write a lot today.

Also... would definitely get... oh yeah, you get scared and yell. That rally was fun, except when you have to hear it. The lights used to stay out for one to two hours. I also forgot all the materials that are electric would not work because the electricity went out and the worst thing that could ever happen especially when you cannot use the X-Box 360 or when you cannot use the computer. Especially when you are watching a movie and a blackout goes during the favorite part. Moreover, when you are playing X-Box 360 and you're on the last level and you have not saved it and a blackout comes. You have to start on the game all over again! Dang blackouts!

-Bat Man

From The Beat: Now this is the kind of writing we wish more of our classmates would do. Thank you for writing so much about the topic, and filling us in. It sounds like you and your brother punch each other a lot! When do you think that will stop? One thing we know you could do in a blackout is light a candle, pick up a pencil and paper, and write what you're feeling and experiencing. We'd love to read that!

Combining Family Traits

Some people say I have my father's eyes, my mother's face and bone structure, my father's mole on my right hand, my mother's nose, my mother's height when she was my age.

But I am the youngest, and I have more — my brother's face, my other brother's wisdom, my cousin's height, my parent's hair. But that doesn't make me me.

-Lisa

From The Beat: Well, we love your description of how you look, and that you have your brother's wisdom. But you took us to the edge by telling us that none of these things make you who you are, and then you left us there! You didn't tell us what it is that makes you you. So, what is that?

Running

What's poppin'? What's crackin'? For me nothing. Just that my lil' sis just ran away from this place, and a friend of mine also. It seem so easy to run away from this program and I just ask myself what the hell am I doing here still in this dump?

Lose my daughter is a whole different thing. What I was talking about, have a daughter change my life.

From The Beat: Yes, it would be easy to run from this place, but it's very, very hard to run from yourself. You are in this place because you have a serious problem that caused you to lose your daughter! That should be enough for you to want to finish this program. Running is the easiest thing in the world. That's why children do it. Staying is much harder — the job for a grown up. Which are you?

-Tejanitas

The Worst Teacher In The World

I had the worst teacher in the world. I had her for 6th grade home school. She was so ugly and even her voice irritated me. She was the teacher for me and a couple of my older friends. We all met at the same time (all my friends, me and the teacher). We used to steal her cereal and milk and hide in the bathroom with the heater on.

-Merrily

From The Beat: You haven't told us anything at all about what made her the worst teacher in the world. Certainly it can't be because she was ugly and had an irritating voice. If that's all that made you steal from her and hide from her, then maybe it's just that you were the worst students in the world!

I have figured out that she will always hurt me and not help me.

Addicted Mom

I regret taking that first hit because of the person I smoked with. She was supposed to love me not hurt me. I have figured out that she will always hurt me and not help me. See, I love my mom. But that's what I get for have a crack head for a mom. See, she always 'bout me, my weed and my block. I feel bad now 'cause I have always wanted a better mom that won't smoke with me. And will love me always.

-B-Eyes

From The Beat: You definitely deserve a mom who acts like a mom. But your mom is suffering from a disease that she cannot cure by herself. That doesn't make it right for her to smoke with you, but at least it makes it understandable. You can't cure your mom. The only person you can work on is yourself, and we hope you're doing the work you need to do so that you can simply say, "No," to your mom, as you must say it every time you have the opportunity to fall back into your own addictive patterns.

Voices In Spanish

Me Voy Al Rancho

Hola homies. Pues, ¿miren aquí quien esta escribiendo de Nuevo? Por una parte, estoy alegre porque ya estoy en el Rancho. Si no me meto en problemas, en el mes de Septiembre me van a dejar ir a la casa. Un saludos a todos los que estan leyendo esto.

Mi musica preferida dice "que es lo que me queda despues que tú te fuistes, dejastes un monton de recuerdo. Dos o tres fotografia. Esto es como vivir en una fuerte tormenta. Mi corazón sufre, llora y se lamenta. Te busque mil veces. No había otro modo. Ahora tengo que dejar que el tiempo lo borre todo." Mi cantante favorito es Jeezy, "Soul Survivor."

From The Beat: ¿Y cuales son tus planes en el Rancho? ¿Lo vas a terminar? Lucha duro para regresar a casa. Sobre tu música, esta bien triste. Nos imaginamos el daño que ha hecho esta muchacha en ti. ¿La perdistes tú por estar aquí o que paso?

I'm Going To The Ranch

Hello homies. Well, look at who's writing once again? On one part, I am happy because I'm already at the Ranch. If I don't get myself into any problems, they're going to let me go home in the month of September. A shout-out goes out to everyone who is reading this.

My favorite music says, "What is it that I am left with after you left? You left a ton of memories. Two or three photographs. This is how it is like to live in a strong storm. My heart suffers, cries, and it laments. I looked for you a thousand times. There was no other way. Now I have to let time erase it all." My favorite artist is Jeezy, "Soul Survivor."

-Soldado, LCRS SF/YGC

From The Beat: And what are your plans at the Ranch? Are you going to finish your program? Fight hard so you can go back home. About your music, it is very sad. We can imagine the damage that this girl has done in you. Did you lose her because you're in here? What happened?

Espero El Día De Ir A Casa

¿Que paso homies? Ya saben, pues aquí nomas kickiandola en juvenile hall esperando para ir al Group Home. Fui a corte el 7 de Marzo y me dijo el juez que me tengo que esperar dos semanas para ir al group home.

Espero terminar mi programa para poder estar con mi familia y poder hacer mi vida con mi jaina y tener mi morrito. Estoy cansado de estar en la Juvenile Hall. Me gustaria estar afuera con mis seres queridos y mi jaina.

From The Beat: Esperamos que de verdad cumplas con tus metas. La verdad es que ahora vas a tener a alguien más por quien ver. Tener un hijo es una gran responsabilidad. Hay muchas cosas maravillosas afuera esperando por que valen la pena. Sigue pensando positivo que esto te dara una mejor vida.

I'm Waiting For The Day I Get To Go Home

What's going on homies? Y'all already know what's up. Well, I'm just here kicking it in Juvenile Hall waiting to go to the Group Home. I went to court on the 7th of March and the judge told me that I have to wait two weeks before I can go to the Group Home.

I expect to finish my program so I can be with my family and be able to make a new life with my girlfriend and have my little man. I'm tired of being in Juvenile Hall. I would like to be on the outs with my loved ones and my girlfriend.

-Greñas 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hope that you truly fulfill your goals. The truth is, now you're going to have someone else to look after. Having a child is a huge responsibility. There are a lot of wonderful things waiting for you on the outs that are worth your time. Continue thinking positively since this will give you a better life.

Ser Misguiado

Las cosas que me arrepiento haber hecho en esta vida es andar haciendo las cosas malas por las cuales estoy aqui.

Cuando escucho la palabra misguiado, pienso que no debo ser misguiado.

No puedo decir quienes me han misguiado. Conozco a muchos que son misguiado, uno de ellos es mi amigo el Zelaya.

From The Beat: ¿Que haras después de saber que has sido misguiado? ¿Dejaras que te misguen despues de esto?

To Be Misguided

The things that I regret having done in this life is going around and doing bad thing for which I am in here.

When I hear the word "misguided," I feel like I should not be misguided.

I can't say who has misguided me. I know a lot of people who are misguided. One of them is my friend Zelaya.

-Naun B4 SF/YGC

From The Beat: What are you going to do after finding out that have been misguided? Are you going to allow yourself to be misguided again after this?

Me Arrepiento De Vender Drogas

Yo me arrepiento de haber andado vendiendo drogas en los Estados Unidos. Por culpa de esto, ahora me siento preso.

From The Beat: ¿Aprenderas algo de esta experiencia? ¿Lo volverias hacer? ¿Que ganastes con vender droga?

I Regret Selling Drugs

I regret going around and selling drugs in the United States. Because of doing this, now I feel locked up.

-Douglas B4 SF/YGC

From The Beat: Will you learn something from this experience? Would you do it again? What did you gain from selling drugs?

The Beat
2013

I Remember When...

I remember a time when each day was long,
When the world was a playground and my life a song,
And I fluttered through years with barely a care,
Ignoring the future and what waited there
School was intriguing and filled with delights.
I played away daytimes and dreamed away nights.
My parents assured me I had nothing to fear,
And that no matter what happened, they'd always be there

Little I knew of a world outside home,
Where tragedy, sorrow and murder could roam
All I saw were blue skies, rainbows, and stars
I looked past destruction of buildings and cars.
As a child, my biggest concern was just me;
I had to be happy, I had to be free.
And if I was content, I would not shed a tear,
And no matter what happened, I still would be here.
But as I grow up, darkness starts to set in;
My bright world has turned into concrete and tin.
I now see the violence I looked past before;
My friends start to die and my heart hits the floor.

Deadly diseases claim people I love,
There are landfills below me, pollutin' above.
I often think back to when life was a game.
But no matter what happens, it can't be the same.
There are days when I just want to break down and howl,

To give up completely, to throw in the towel,
But I hold my head high and I push my way through.
I have too much to give and so much to do.
And I make a vow that, though it'll be hard,
I'll go on with a smile and play every card.
I'll give all I can, help others and love.
No matter what happens, life will bloom again,
And the strength I don't have will come from above.

YOUNG SPOOKS

This young man writes to us from Yerington, Nevada and we can tell he's got a great head on his shoulders. From his poem where he recalls how things were for him as a child, a lot of things hit home for us as he illustrates the innocence of childhood incredibly. Hopefully, he stays in touch because if all his thoughts are anything like this, we'd love him to be consistent with us.

As a child, my biggest
concern was just me;
I had to be happy, I had to be free.
And if I was content,
I would not shed a tear,
And no matter what happened,
I still would be here.

Subscriber

It's hard being in the game
And at the same time behind bars
Meanwhile all you think about is going home
And it sucks starin' at these walls
Livin' in the bay ain't no game
I'm tellin' you man ninjas go insane
Rollin' the dice can't pay the price
Forever now yo' life is mine
Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide
Ha, ha yo' ass is mine
To all my homies doin' time
Keep ya' heads up, it's all in the mind

LIL' STACKS

Lil' Stacks, who wrote for The Beat regularly from YGC and The Ranch, reminds us again of his struggles to continue down a new path, and how overcoming those struggles gives him the certainty that he can overcome the struggles that freedom creates. Lil' Stacks shares his latest thoughts with The Beat from his group home in Modesto, CA.

Hard Times

Sometimes I find myself falling off track.
But God brings me back
And gets my mind right
Beamed on by the limelight
But how long will it last
Girls, fast car, and fast cash
I'm holding tight
Sometimes I want to let go
But I don't 'cause I'm not sho'
If heaven got a ghetto
Yo' Vern the sun don't shine forever
But long as it is we go shine together
I got nothin' but respect for The Beat
For keeping me on my feet.

Man, if we can do it
in YGC,
We can do it on
them streets

Hall Days

Man, back in them halls, I can't lie
We used to have hella good times and bad times
Riots, fights
Chillin' wit' yo' roommate choppin' it up all night
Me, Squeak, and Mev
Crew cleanin' yo' unit for ice cream.
Vern, lil' bra, we all we got, man
I love you lil' bra, we used to make it
Fun no matter how hard staff
Was hatin'
We go make it look at us now, out
We used to bet who was go get Pieces Of the Week.
Man, if we can do it in YGC,
We can do it on them streets
But even tho' we had good times in the halls
And we used to clown
Like Squeak the halls two thumbs down.

Call Heaven

If you call heaven, who would you ask to speak to:
God, Jesus, or one of yo' people?
Sixty seconds to talk, what would you say:
I miss you, I love you, hope to see you some day?
If I called and no one answered the phone,
Does that mean that God ain't home
Or do it mean that I'm livin' wrong?
Most likely I would ask for J-O and Mike
And see what's going on,
"Like big bra, I miss you, what it is?"
I know Money Earnin' Vern would call Spank and ain't thizz.
Then I would ask God to talk to my dad.
What if God said sorry pop was too bad.
I would be mad, sad.
With my last twenty seconds I would ask to talk to Albino Dre
And say I miss you, love you — hope to see you some day.

WT GRAJEDA This is getting good! For the last month WT Grajeda showcases his incredible talents and steps up huge, thanks in part to his son, Chris who so kindly offered us this amazingly well read/told story, Tiger. In last week's issue (11.11) Tiger aka Chris and Sweetie Girlie aka Sabrina are still in the world called Ouranos, a place where everything appears to be pure, safe, non-evil and dream like. Well, our fearless young couple decided to pull a mango (known in Ouranos as ognams) from a tree, when out of nowhere the tree branches begin to attack due to feeling violated until Koinonia, the dog-frog talking critter came to their rescue and in time introduced them to the tree, known as Sebastos Lumberdo Lumber, a walking tree, who soon obliged in giving them ognams to eat.

Tiger, Part 6

At one point you asked Sebastos how old he was and his answer was: "Young, but before frog and mail."

You asked Koinonia what was mail, as it turned out, mail is what we call fish. You then asked Koinonia who was the oldest. We found out that Theos, Theios and Theiotes were first of all and will remain as One as the first of all. I hadn't understood an inkling of what he meant, but you seemed to somehow? Second was the Elkekto dunastes, and the third was Lebushe clown of the Lumber clan. All this talk about Theiotes Strider was intriguing, but before I had a chance to inquire more about him, Sebastos shrieked out in an ear piercing sound.

"Tiger Christopher Grajeda, Sabrina Sweet Girlie, the Lebab Lumberly Lumber." Sebastos announced.

We both were surprised to see that we stood atop of a ridge looking upon what we could only describe as the most spectacular sight that we've ever experienced. Vivid colors of reds, blues, oranges. Hues of yellow, purples, violets, and many, many greens. The panoramic view that we were gazing down upon was so overwhelming that both of us just gasped in wonder and delight. There were so many colors that between you and I, we couldn't put names even to half of them. I made a comment to you saying, that the only time I'd ever seen so many colors in one place was in one of them big boxes of Crayola color crayons, you answered back "Me too"

In the matter of minutes that it took for us to reach our destination everything seem to take on yet even more of a brightness; if that was possible, and grew much more cheerful, though in words we could not explain why. We found ourselves in the middle of a valley with hundreds of thousands of gorgeous trees in every shape, size, texture, and fragrance. Sebastos stopped and let us down gently. You lifted Koinonia off your lap and placed him on the ground.

Koinonia stood upon his hindlegs and whirled around in what looked like some fancy jug and said, "Aye, mes beauty, mes eloquent, ribit, wonders of Ouranos, mes misses yous long, ribit, how happys mes is here once, ribit, again. Your magnificent Sebastos, ribit, blesses us with such beautys as yous." Koinonia went back on all four legs and started running around all the pretty trees.

Sebastos said, "my lovely, please meet our guest Tiger Christopher Grajeda and Sabrina Sweet Girlie. They are of the human origin from world Cheled Earth, very nice. Tiger Christopher Grajeda, Sabrina Sweet Girlie, my lovely Flowerly of the Lumberdo Lumberly Lebaldo Lumber."

"Yo what's happenin' Flowerly, that's a cool name. You look hecka cool too. What's all the flowers called?" I pointed to the flowers that bloomed everywhere on the tree branches, then went upon my tiptoes and stuck my nose in one that hung low and inhaled deeply. "Wow! That smells hecka live, smell them Sweet Girlie."

You said, "Hello Flowerly, you're very pretty and that certainly is such a nice fragrant you're wearing. My name is Sabrina but you may call me Sweet Girlie, I'm a human female." You reached out gently brushing your fingertips against her bark.

Flowerly's voice sounded like a fresh cool stream of mountain spring water flowing as she said, "Your name is also a sweet sound, I'm sure that you're a very pretty girl for being of human kind..."

"The finest!" I cut her off without thinking.

You looked at me and smiled. I blushed, for I really didn't meant to interrupt, especially blurt like I did.

Flowerly and you resumed your conversation.

"My dear, come now and let me introduce you to some of the other Lumberly Lebab Lumber, for I am most positive that you will impress them. Come now, please feel free for Ouranos is also yours." Flowerly went on with her cool stream of words while leading you towards the other colorful trees.

"Well, now, Koinonia and Sebastos, how we gonna spend our time, they went off to have fun what we gonna do?" I said this somewhat moppy and cocky, because I wanted to go with you.

"Aye, ribit, what's yous mean spend times? Times not here."

Koinonia shook his head and his goatee and floppy ears were tossed to and fro.

"Yo, I mean let's kills some time, let's do something. How me and my girlfriend gonna get home?"

"Aye. Ribit, kills not here, times not here. Mes and yous wait for Theiotes, Strider takes yous and Sabrina Sweet Girlie home, ribit, he only coulds, ribit, Sebastos, wes shows yous and tell yous."

"Yes, Tiger Christopher Grajeda, come let us show you Ouranos and tell you about our history." Sebastos stretched out one of his huge limbs, grabbing Koinonia, I climbed on. As we started moving Koinonia and Sebastos started talking.

It was very awe-inspiring to find out that we were the only humans to ever have walked on Ouranos, unless one counted Kakos Heylel Diabolos as human, which he really isn't, but sure sounded like many humans I hear about on the news.

Ouranos had four winds which they called Hagios, Pneuma, Eirene and Charis. And one Sun, which I thought was funny because as bright as it was, there was no sun out or winds. They called the sun, Airo.

Every living creature on Ouranos got along and shared help with each other. That Ekkekto dunastes lived in the old forest and only came out when they chose to, and when they did, they always brought song, music and story of truth. That the Ekkekto dunastes alone has exousia (I guess that was magic - it sounded like it to me). Sebastos said that it was Theos who made speech and that is why everything with breath talked. That Strider also had a very powerful word, which was made stronger by rainbows. That the birds were made of the rainbow, which explained their multicolored feathers. Besides the Ekkekto dunastes only the birds sang.

"Yo, Sweet Girlie could sing hecka pretty. I once heard her singing a song, she didn't know that I was listening, she didn't even know I was there. And I didn't let her know. I was on the roof of her father's house with her brother Anthony, but he was on the other side though. She sang three songs, that's when I knew that I liked her, so don't go saying anything yo, you hear."

I really wasn't paying too much attention to what I was saying. I was just caught up in the rapture of thinking about you and Sebastos' history.

I hadn't the slightest idea on how much time past all of a sudden we stopped. I looked down, Sebastos stood erect with a great part of his top overhanging the side of a riverbank; no, not a river, more like a wide natural brook with crystal clear water. Looking upon it somewhat gave me a strong feeling of aspiration, the feeling was so acute that I nearly fell off Sebastos' branch.

The bed of the brook seemed to be made up of precious gems that reflected the sun Airo (which I couldn't see) and the crystal clear water, it's array was marvelously arranged in the most splendid fashion. I must of looked so overwhelmed that Koinonia stopped talking. Sebastos sat us down on the ground, I knelt down, dipped my hand in the cool water and scooped up a handful of precious stones with other such materials as gold, pearls, silver, etc... My hand sparkled with diamonds, rubies, sapphires, jade, every color stone imaginable. I couldn't put a name to most of them. But, yet, I know they were very real and very expensive.

"Yo, what's this?" The question was to either of them.

Sebastos answered. "This is Rainbow's ring. It extends around the diameter of Ouranos. It is of great distance, you could start to journey from here and many seasons would come to pass before your journey led you back here. This is called Nachal but we call it Elkraps. It is said that the Ekkekto dunastes made Rainbow, and Sun fell in love with Rainbow, and in return Rainbow fell in love with Sun. And to consummate the promise of Rainbow's love for Sun, Rainbow created Elkraps and wrapped it around Ouranos. So Sun asked Ekkekto dunastes for a token that Sun could bestow on Rainbow, the Ekkekto dunastes presented Sun with two multicolor birds that sang. Sun, for love, bestowed on Rainbow the two special birds, which are now many. And when Rainbow and Sun are out - birds fly over the Rainbow and sing in the Sun."

As Sebastos recited the very intriguing history of Elkraps I made a design on the ground with the stones and precious metals I gathered outta the brook. When I finished the design it resembled a rainbow, a sun, one tree, a dog, a bird, and many multicolor flowers sprinkling the bottom. For an afterthought, I laid gold nuggets around it in a circle, then a bigger circle on top of that like a big number eight with the bigger hoop on top and a picture in the bottom hoop.

"Aye, yous, ribit, that's nice." Koinonia started chattering on. "Yous make it comes true, ribit, yous put yous hands in the waters, put waters in the mouths, ribit, drip from yous mouth, ribit, on prettys and say what yous feel is prettys and prettys be yous."

(To be continued next week.)

Hi Beat Within

Muchas gracias for the news magazine you guys sent me. There's a lot of good, touching stories of all these young ones. Very good rhyming as well. I thought I'd drop this true story of mine, hoping one day you guys publish it and hoping I can help some of those young minds of our generation of teens and they can take life serious before they get 3 strikes like the batter.

First and foremost, allow me to send you mis saludos and utmost respetos to you all at The Beat Within. Please allow me to chop these few lineas with you!

Every day I wake up and thank God that I live another day. Sometimes I get tired of the gun spray, but what can I do as I roll up my mattress and start another day at the big house, all strapped up with all these metal flakes. It's hectic and war is on. It's a never-ending story and it continues to escalate as days go by and the clock ticks.

Growing up in my little crazy town where the funk is on in the streets of Salinas California, home of a few carnales and homies that are phony like baloney. It all started out firme and kick back, going at war with the enemy, parties, dames, guns and dope. All of us representing, like cheetos. Was the thing to do. Drive-bys, all-nighters, robberies, stickings, you name it. All for our cause.

But like they say, what goes up must come down. The farm, juvi, county bounty, in and out all the time. Earn respeto. Put in work, like all the youngsters do. But allow me to tell you something. All that Juvi, group home, county shhh is nothing. If you can really say you put in work, try going to the mainline in prison, fools, where tomorrow is not promised. Survive 10 years and then you can say you put in work and earned stripes. In otras palabras, don't say you are chignon, Mr. Tuff Cookie, if you never even stepped into a pinta! That goes to all you youngsters that think you are the shhhh, just 'cause you have fired a cuete or stabbed someone. No, no. Let yourself get checked before you wreck yourself.

I tell you nothing but the truth from experience. Now please allow me to tell you about the times when your so-called homeboys backstab you like they never knew you. By now you earned every stripe, you put in work. You slip and fall, get caught up for stupid shhhh, that he said, she said, and so forth. Now you get smutt, crossed out. You ain't about shhhh 'cause you're a mark-ass sucka. Where's all the

MR. SAD BOY HOSER

Sadly, but our reality, here's another old, yet powerful piece sent to The Beat last October, 2005, sent in by Mr. Sad Boy Hoser, who writes us from Salinas Valley State Prison. We do not know too much about Mr. Sad Boy Hoser, but he spits the truth, tough love style, and if we're lucky he'll be back, unless we have totally offended him. Well, we hope he and anyone who is still waiting to see their work understands the high volume of letters we receive each week. Sorry for the delay on our end. We hope it is only a matter of time before you see your work. Thanks again Mr. Sad Boy Hoser.

homies now?? What happened to the "N" shit or the "S" shit? I thought you were chignon, all down, all tatted back, repping across your chest for life. Shhhh. Or your crew tatted on your face. What happened? You're a peseta now. You no longer have one enemy but two enemies and a price on your head now. Everybody hates you because you're marked.

But you know what? Your familia is still there. They always were the only ones that cared and loved you for real. When you were having a blast with the fellas, hood rats, or sconkas, you didn't even think about your familia but let me tell you something. You're now on the bad news list, serving a fifteen-year term for putting in work. Where's all your homies? Where's everyone at? Nobody. By now, no one writes to you, not even the females you had. Shhhh. Thinking you were chignon. No kids, not even your familia, writes you. What now? Ask yourself. Where's everyone at? You finally realize you're by yourself. Who's chignon now? No. No more. It's all over. Put it like this. You either end up shot, crippled, prison or in a body bag.

So to all you young ones, think about it before you think you're a tough cookie and never even stepped into a prison mainline. But you still have one shot. Your one last chance. And that is God. Your last resort. He will never let you down and He will always be there for you in good times and bad times. So think really hard before you screw your life like I did and ended up in prison with nothing or no one but me and God. Please take my advice and change your life before you end up like me and it's too late. Just a little advice to all you vatos who think you're the shhs: Game over!

Muchas gracias for your time. Please print this for all the youngsters in our generation who have fallen in the wrong path and continue to be another teen statistic of gangs and crime. God bless you all I'm gone with the wind. Con respeto.

He will never let you down and He will always be there for you in good times and bad times. So think really hard before you screw your life like I did and ended up in prison with nothing or no one but me and God.

ISAAC ALVARADO This is an old letter, among many we have missed due to Beat overload, from a new friend in Isaac Alvarado, writing us from Salinas Valley State Prison. It was postmarked July 7, 2005, so we don't know if he's still there, but we'll get him this Beat and hope he in due time receives his work amongst many. We hope to hear from Isaac down the road and this time we'll truly be more timely.

Dear Beat Within

First of all, greetings and respect to all of you good people. This is the first time reading your stuff and I have to give it to all of you for all this good ass deed you guys are doing, showing all the support you guys do. Man, that's a lot of help, especially for all the youngsters like myself. I really gotta appreciate all of this good work you guys are putting in. It made me feel good to read a lot of these lil' homies and young ladies.

As I said, I'm a young Chicano from the area of Orange County, the crazy ass city of Santa Ana. I'm sure you guys know where it's at. However, I'm doing a few years myself and I would love to get a little support. As you already know, it is hard to do time if you got your loved ones going through stress over you. You know, it really hurts a lot. I got two

kids, a lil' princess and my lil' mini me! So it breaks my heart not bein' able to see 'em as often as possible. I just hope that God gives me the chance to be back out there with 'em sooner than later, que no!

Listen, a little advice to all of the youngsters doing time, specially all of the ones up in YA and Juvie: check it!! I have been through all that just like many other fools. So mines to all you lil' homies is to just chill and have more heart for your familia than you do for your so-called homeboys. It is rare when you actually can find a righteous homeboy. I'm not saying you ain't gonna find one, but you gonna suffer a lot before all that!

Straight from the halls to the pen, I just regret not bein' able to spend more time with my loved ones. All that bein' a hardcore vato is not worth a damn thing. I know that is a fact, OK! I realize that it's just worthless. Believe that, lil' homies. It's all drama. These fools can have that if that's the way they wanna learn. Ouch!

So hit the outs and stay close to your familia, which is my best advice to all of those missing your loved ones right now.

ERIC FOSTER We're pleased to bring our Beat readers the third of Eric Foster's autobiographical sketches. It reads like the best of romance novels, with a twist at the end that makes us look forward to Part 4. Eric pours out his life from the Richard J Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego, CA.

This is My Life: The Testament X, Part 3

The last few days seemed to pass with an unknown grace and a peal of jasper. Everything was somehow falling into place. My blooming love and interest in Janet felt heaven sent. Amongst other things, I didn't hear the usual lip I would from Tren when I ditched him. Or maybe he actually was buying my story, not that I really cared. Mainly I just didn't want to have him all in my mix. Things with me and Janet were going quite well, and he'd only cause mischief with that annoying sarcasm of his. I couldn't imagine him ever having a girlfriend. As I continued to walk, I thought and was able for a split second to see a girl kicking his ass. I always believed his sharp sarcasm was the main reason he would surely die a virgin.

Most people just didn't take too kindly to positive or negative sarcasm. At least not around the streets of L.A. Sarcasm for people in L.A. was like a green light gala for violence and war. Everyone living here had too much pride. Sadly, a lot of the times it haunted them and became their worst enemy.

As I approached the corner of Normandie and 54th I felt dismayed and kept myself discreet. This was not the type of area, or place for that matter, for me to be caught alone. Nevertheless some things were well worth the risks.

As the nervous fearful feeling continued to creep up my back and sit on my shoulders, I dug in my pocket for my cigarettes. Just as I let out a sigh and exhale of smoke, I nearly crapped on myself. Arms came around my upper body from behind squeezing me in tighter. Immediately I snatched myself free while dropping the cigarette as I turned around.

"What the hell Eric! Man, you should get more sleep at night. You're way too jumpy," Janet said with concern in her eyes. At first I was just overwhelmed with anger because of the uncanny surprise. It was quickly wiped away and destroyed by Janet's pretty face once I focused in on her.

"Girl, you look good with your eyebrows crushed in like that and highly serious."

"Eric, you really shouldn't charm yourself, " she said. "Seriously ... Why are you darn near jumping outta your pants?" I could see that she would only accept an honest answer.

"Come on Janet, you know I don't like being around here. I'd rather be at school than be on this corner. Don't worry. I'm okay, I just like to be careful, that's all. Seriously, everything is cool. I just was taken away by your beauty and sweet smell of your perfume," I said.

"You charm yourself... But without a doubt, you make a girl feel really wanted," she confessed.

"Really? Seriously, I do?" I asked.

"See, that's what I mean. There you go again. If I get mad at you the only way to get rid of you would be by means of pepper spray. Even then I don't think I'd actually want to get rid of you... You're too sweet."

I was happy to get going and away from that corner. As we walked I thought about how the rest of the day would turn out. I was grateful to have been able to get everything that I would need yesterday. The last thing I wanted right now was to run around my neighborhood getting a few drinks or hook-up from down the street.

Exactly as I assumed, my house was all quiet and looking as no one had been there for a week. Still, I preferred going in the back door instead of the front. I did not want to be in

view of Betty. The old lady would mind everyone's business but her own. As we both entered the door, suddenly all the danger and mystic realms of the outside world fell behind us. Janet stood there for half a minute in silence before asking me to use the bathroom.

"It's right down the hall, first door on the right. By the way, be careful. The water in the sink gets really hot."

"Yeah I bet it does..." Janet said teasingly with a smile.

The one thing that I did forget, however, was to clean my room. Now I felt just plain stupid as I picked up dirty socks and undershirts that should have been put in a hamper a week ago. I suddenly cursed myself for being so lazy and neglecting my room. Just as I was throwing the last pair of socks under my bed, I heard an outburst of laughter.

"How long have you been standing there in the doorway?" I asked

"As long as you have been throwing socks and shirts under your bed," she said, still a giggle in her voice as she said it.

"Funny...huh, very funny," I said with an obvious hint of embarrassment in my voice.

"Oh! How cute... He dose have a shameful nature he hides," Janet joked. "Well look, go ahead and hook up a drink and a blunt... cause you can't clean anyways. I'll tidy up a little here while you handle that."

I stood there in surprise and fear — totally because I didn't know what Janet might find cleaning my room. The care of it left as I really took notice to Janet as she started her cycle of cleaning. Her white shorts were almost too tight for comfort I thought. Nevertheless they fit her perfectly as she got down to clean the unmentionables beneath my bed. I could just catch a glimpse of what looked like a pink thong as Janet squatted to pick up shirts.

"What?" Janet asked while looking up at me. "Are you going to hook that up or what?"

"Yeah... for sure. I'm gonna hook that up," I replied. I smiled to myself once I turned my back and left my room to be violated.

I knew where to hide things I never wanted anyone to find. No one likes to move heavy things, so I always hid things behind the dryer. After sliding it back in place, I held up the bottle of Seagram's gin and smiled with delight. At the fridge I recovered O.J. and some ice. And almost forgot the cups if it wasn't for the fact I thought I'd need a spoon. After making another round of checking the back door, I proceeded my walk back to my room.

Soon as I stepped inside my room, I was caught in astonishment by the neatness of my room. Not only that, it wasn't every day I walk in and see a pretty girl lying on my bed. If my mom could see me or find out about this... she would kick my ass.

"Well, do you want to move in too?" I asked, trying to fake her cleaning up and lying on my bed as an annoyance.

"Maybe that would be a good thing. Besides, you can't clean worth crap anyways. Don't worry boo, you're no different from my bum brother and his weird cleaning habits," Janet revealed. "And don't act like you don't like it. My brother is always grateful when I clean. And just so you know, Mr. Saser, I can read you like a book. So stop acting like you're mad and just come sit down."

No way was I going to say out loud that she hit the nail on the head. Still, in the three seconds of silence we both knew she was right. I allowed myself to sit next to Janet on the bed. She helped me break the ice and make our drinks.

After a full hour of drinking, smoking and laughing, we both just lay back on the bed. Once I begin to caress her stomach, we instantly started kissing. Although she resisted the quickness of my fingers undoing her shorts, the effort was futile because her emotions betrayed her.

"Eric...Eric...wait, hold on. I think this is going too fast,"

continued from previous page

she said coming out of the romantic trance.

"Well, what do you want, or what?" I asked.

"I like you and everything but I just... well... I just think we need to chill out for now," she said fighting back a well of tears.

I held her closer and allowed her to rest her head on my chest. Right then I felt the mound of tears fall and saw her well of confused emotions. Without a thought I cupped my hand to her cheek and let a dozen tears fall into the palm of my hand, then closed it into a tight fist.

"What are you doing? What's wrong?" Janet asked.

"I just think with these tears in my hand, I'll be able to hold you forever... plus I'll just hold these tears so you won't have to cry anymore." Before I realized it, Janet was fast asleep.

Soon as I opened my eyes my heart jack hammered in my chest. I don't know how to keep myself outta trouble, was my first thought as I sat up in bed. Janet lay next to me in bra and a thong. Surely I was going to get my ass in trouble today. The knocking on my door only contributed to the power of the jackhammer in my chest pounding away with violent velocity. I didn't want it to be true and almost silently wished I was on Normandie and 54th, instead of in bed with my half-naked girlfriend.

"Eric!... Eric!... Why is this door locked? Come and open up the door right now!" My mom shouts.

Janet began stirring out of the realm of sleep into reality. Before she could come to her full state of pure awareness, I put my index finger to my lips.

"Shhhh.... Don't say anything. Be quiet! Mom's is here. Please just hide under the bed till I see what's up."

"Eric... I know you're in there boy. Open this door 'cause I ain't gonna ask you again... Hurry up!" Mom's shouts in a higher tone.

Janet was in her way under the bed as my eyes lingered on her half-nude backside. I thought to myself, "God I love this girl," and made my way to open the door.

Once I pulled the door open I was surprised by my mother's demeanor. It felt sort of falsified, out of place noticeably like toilet paper in a family room.

"Boy, you know I don't like any locked doors in my house," she explained in a calm voice. "When you are paying the bills, then you can lock the door. Now help me bring these groceries outta the car.... I don't know what's wrong with you kids nowadays," she said walking down the hallway.

I stood there in the door way and let out a silent sigh of relief and confusion. I couldn't believe both me and Janet had overslept. It was already 4:16 pm and school hours were long over. As I gathered the last bags of groceries I thought

ERIC FOSTER (CONT.)

about Janet.

Once I got back in my room I could slightly smell the scent of alcohol hung in the air. Followed by the smell of old smoke. Closing the door behind me I knew that I had a mission impossible on my hands tonight.

"Janet! Babe, are you all right?" I whispered.

"Well sure, if under a bed is what you call all right," she replied.

"I'm really sorry, Boo. I feel asleep too, once you went out. My bad. Will you forgive me?" I asked.

"Why is it I can never stay mad at you long enough to slap your ass?" she wondered out loud.

"Do you really want to?" I asked in sincerity.

"That's what I mean, there you go with that thing again. Making a girl feel all groovy. No, I'd rather give you a big wet one though," Janet said coming from under the bed.

It seemed almost like a fantasy watching a beautiful girl come from the clutches of my bed. It was like Steve Urkel dreaming of Lora and himself together. Things like this just didn't happen every day. Looking at Janet's milky smooth skin, I was drawn to her (resistance is futile) straight away. I held her tight as our worries fell and our lips locked together. As her chest rose and fell I could almost feel our heartbeats. Something about the nice scent of her hair made me not want to care about anything else. As I caressed the corner of her mouth with my lips, her head slightly tilted back, allowing me to kiss her chin and neck gently.

I didn't take account to the knock coming from the door. In my surprise Janet pushed me back bringing me to reality away from her unique trance.

"Hey Eric, one of your stupid friends is at the front door," my sister Alicia announces.

"Get dressed, be quiet and for god sakes....stay in here, all right," I whispered to Janet.

"Well, who is it at the door stupid?" I yelled.

"Go find out for yourself, dumb ass!" my sister shot back.

Walking to the front door I thought, if it's not one thing its another. Soon as I threw the door open it was an utter shock. Tren stood there breathing hard, holding a blood-stained shirt to his upper lip. Before he said the words I knew. At least I thought I did.

"Man doggy dog! Where the hell were you all day? Me and my homie diet..."

(To be continued)

PAUL SANGU JONES

Look back, our friend, who's the mighty Paul Sangu Jones, who delivers his heat and wisdom from one of the darkest places imaginable, the SHU, in Pelican Bay State Prison in Crescent City, CA. We thank Paul for this eye opening piece of commentary. We hope to hear from Paul in future issues.

The Conscience Speaks

We have reached an odd, maybe unique point in the history of Hip Hop, when the distant future is easier to imagine than the more proximate months and years ahead.

The possibilities are tantalizing. Hip Hop music could be the musical infrastructure of a new sound paradigm, the ultimate in distributed power generation. When words, backed by a bass line and drums, could act as powerful ideas that move people to see our world for all that it is not, and eliminate the need for corporate media altogether, as our primitive minds now conceive of it, as rigid and unbendable government lies being forced down our TV-stunted minds -

and they/we will be REAL. The exterior world will be recreated inside the essence of our truth with panoptic verisimilitude like that described by KRS-ONE in his song "Love's Gonna Get You," offering 'hood' imagery, and a magnification of a lifestyle unknown in middle America except through virtual images coming from an unfeeling voice on a TV screen.

Whatever the future brings, one thing has already changed, and it is so fundamental that we might not have even noticed the changing. Gone forever is the time when we had so many detractors detailing Hip Hop's demise, in terms of it being a fad in the world in which it operated. Consumers are beginning to understand the "reality" is here to stay, and it runs deeper than greener-than-thou Hollywood stars glorifying themselves by appearing in Hip Hop videos.

Hip Hop is, after all, not jut music but the tangible part of a global movement, vast and abstract and hard to comprehend. But they are starting to get the picture.

G. ALVARADO

G. Alvarado is back in the pages of *The Beat Within*, and he delivers strong thoughts and poems, that are very straightforward when you get to the poems you read. One thing for sure G. Alvarado is dedicating this collection to the women in his life and to women in general. G. Alvarado writes us from Calipatria State Prison, in Calipatria CA.

An Afterthought

I believe life is an on-going lesson and everything that our actions make happen is ours...even if our present situation is unimaginably bad. There's always someone else who's worse off. So sitting around to feel pity for ourselves for too long is not the best we can do (with so much time we have). It occurred to me that most of us doing time are more often than not waiting for something to happen in our lives. I'm here to say to you, who are waiting for outside events or persons to make something happen in your life, that you are going to wait to no end.

For no one, but your own self, can free and deliver to the world around you the gift you alone possess. I believe that for us to grow out of the cruel despair that comes with knowing that we are but mere numbers we must accept our faults and realize that we can build over our past trials with the same energy once used to destroy but now use it to construct.

This, or course, is only my humble opinion and feelings. Thank you for allowing me to share them with you all.

Some Sounds

#1 Indifference

is the number one
killer of our soul.

#2 Love is what glues

Two separate beings
Into one
To fill the gap
Between
Yours and the other's heart

#3 It takes

A massive
Team of scientists

To send
One man to the moon

It only takes
One person
To reach
Any known star:
"you"

#4 I saw myself
staring at myself
in the mirror
I then wondered
If the man staring back
Is closer to his destiny
Than I am?

The Gift You Give

Many believe
Real courage
Can only be found
In the trenches of brute force...

I believe
Gut-wrenching valor
Isn't only the fabric
Of warring soldiers
But also
The very element
Which fuels a woman's spirit
To endure the changes
Of pregnancy
And pains of child labor

Her courage is beyond measure
For there is no one
Not a living being
Who can boldly proclaim
Such an act of heroism
As only a mother can

It is a mother
No one else

Whose sole task for nine months
Becomes the nourishment
And protection of the child
Growing under her heart

She becomes
A lioness
Ready to defend her young
Her body is no longer her own
She relinquishes it
To the miracle of bringing
A new being into existence

The mystery of giving birth
Is only for a woman
To experience
But our job as the "father"
Is of equal importance

This is why
A man must never
Turn his back
On this sacred task
We should always
Strive to fulfill our part
In the ageless triangle
Of parenthood

To The Beat Within:

I want to dedicate these words to all the women in my life and to women in general. But especially to my five mothers (the one who brought me to this world and the four - my grand-mom and three aunts - who saw to it that I felt loved, and well-cared for.) Each one of them gave me something I will forever carry in the most sacred part of my heart. And of course, my other aunts - my sister's nieces and cousins - and friends: they all have taught me through their own unique understanding of life a lesson about real love and unbending courage. To you I offer my humble but soul-felt words.

And to The Beat Within writers. Thank you for showing your strength and touch in your written words. I believe that the only way we (men and women) can overcome society's weaknesses is by showing who we really are to each other, to talk and talk until we can finally speak in the same tone of voice; to compliment rather than crush each other's spirits. Gracias, and keep writing! Adios.

My Mother

My mother
Is like a comet
Sent from the stars...
An anchor
At the center of our family

Every imagined thought
Of love and tenderness
Is my mother -

In her veins runs the energy
Of raging oceans
The strength
Of dormant volcanoes...

My dearest mother
Not even time
Or life's many struggles
Are able to stop you

My mom is like a magical dream;
A mystery
From the ether life

She is divinity
Reincarnated
In the female form

She is my mother
Ysabel

Walking Alone

Walking alone -
Along an uneventful crowded street
With only
One thought in mind - "Why me"...
I stumbled upon
A single blade of grass
Protruding from underneath
A concrete slab...

There it stood tall
And in defiance
Of civilization course
Boldly reclaiming
Its turf
I leaned forward
And a sudden feeling
Gave voice to my answer
"BECAUSE I WAS BORN"

God, thank you for being here

I know I get mad at you
When I'm feeling blue
Although I didn't realize you until that day
But I always believed in you
You helped me in my time of need
You helped me through the tragedies
I may not see you face to face
But you see me like a gold lace
I can't hear you
But you're with me wherever you are
So thank you God for being here
When I needed you the most
You may not come on time
But at the last minute there you are
Shining like the rays of the sun
GOD, THANK YOU!
This is for you G. Alvarado
I will pray for you every night
Thank you.

A Note From G. Alvarado

The following letter titled, "Dear G. Alvarado" is from the website "gangsandrkids" and a little girl named Cherie wrote to me, thanking me for my counsel. Here is the letter and the poem she wrote to me,

Dear G. Alvarado

Thank you for answering my questions. I'm strong but you are stronger. I won't let negativity overpower goodness. Is there any way you can get parole? You don't need to be locked up in a cell like an animal. You deserve to be free like a butterfly in the midnight sky. I hope you never change.

I made a bad decision the other day. I overdosed on pills and for the first time in my life I thought I was going to die. I will never do something like that again. You know what? As soon as I'm done writing this letter to you I'm going to throw away my cutting instruments, cigarettes, pills and my old depressed life and start anew.

I started learning Swahili. I know some word but I can't pronounce the others. Reading your letters made me realize that life is precious and you only get one chance to live on earth.

Your poem was GREAT. I got it hanging on my wall with the letters you sent. And instead of joining a gang I'm joining God. And instead of writing about gangs I'm writing a book against them. You give the best advice and I'm thankful for that because without you and the other people on gangsandrkids, I wouldn't be here right now typing you this letter. I wrote a poem called THANK YOU GOD and here is how it goes.

Cathy

Many years have gone by
I remember
The day I met you
There you were
Tall and beautiful
Like an enchantment of April...
Many years have gone by
But you my sister
Are still
My beautiful spring flower

G. ALVARADO (CONT.)

Finding Your Own Beauty

(Dedicated to all the wonderful ladies who are brave enough to explore themselves and who, through their words, let us see what's inside.)

Some rare wild flowers
Are born
Deep in the forest...
No one notices
Their beauty and complexity
Some do make
Their mark
In our hearts
While others
Just evaporate
To become part
Of the winter breeze
But now
Your colors are no longer
A simple green
Mixed together
With the unknowns...
Because now
You are shining, a beauty
All of your own
And it is in this realization
Where you'll find
Your answers

Del Cielo Azul

Nothing is more
Delicate and dangerous
Than a woman's show of love

A woman's love
Is heaven
And madness enfold...

It's driven
Generations into uproar
It crumbles our defenses
Conquering us
With its feminine console

Woman's love
Is a destination
Of utter freedom...
A total surrender
Of soul

No man is exempt
We must all
Soon or later fall

For what is a man
Who has never tasted
The sweet nectar of heaven?

Or who has never
Been devoured
By a woman's passion...

He is an incomplete man
A thirsty nomad
Wandering in the desert
With his eyes closed

ABE BACOS If you're into learning information that's not normally taught, then we have a treat for you this week. This next writer reminds us of how special The Beat is in that we publish ideas that people spend whole lifetimes trying to hide from. And as Abe puts his beliefs and ideals right in our faces we can't help but be curious to know more. He explains the difference between the masses and the "power elite." And as he does so you find yourself suspicious as to what's going on in the world around us — he replenishes our awareness. So if you're ready to rejuvenate your mind with some heavy hitting words, please read on. And as for you Abe, we can't wait for the next installments. He writes to us from the Texas Department of Corrections in Beevil, Texas.

Dear Beat Within

May this scroll find all of you at The Beat in a state of clarity and strength, forever under the protecting guidance of the Most High.

There are a lot of topics I'd like to touch upon and my initial intent had been to submit a few pieces for publication but I reasoned that I'd be able to best express myself in a conversational style; so in essence this letter is the submitted work. It's a letter to both the staff and the readership and it is written with a sense of urgency because of the events that are upon us.

This will definitely be a long ass letter and the editors should feel free to condense whatever may be deemed as non-essential, such as the present and aforementioned digressions alluding to anything besides what will be the locus of this utterance.

"Reality Check: What the people in power know about the world that you don't (but what you really, really need to understand."

The power elite have been called the 'white folks' but the truth is that we're better off calling them the 'wealthy privileged'. Yeah, most are of European descent but there are also a whole bunch of Asians, Arabs, and a few Afrikans and Hispanics in the mix also.

They don't care about you, accept it. They're gangstas just like the rest of us. They're thugs with more money, superior communication skills — note that I did not say 'language skills' — and the two big differences between the power elite gangsta and the street gangsta are...

They front like they're good citizens whereas we're straight up about our business. In other words, they keep their business secret and value secrecy in more than one way.

They possess secret knowledge; keys to understanding existence on planet earth. Some of this knowledge we already know, but the power elite put this knowledge into action and they do so in a most profitable way. Most street thugs who know what the privileged thugs know have used this knowledge merely for easy cash and an early grave, to become another casualty of the notorious 'game'. But the rest of the secret knowledge which 95% of the human population does not know which the elite do know is a matter of much controversy. These secrets pertain to all matters 'occult', 'supernatural', or 'conspiratorial'.

It would take volumes of books to properly elucidate upon the specifics of this lore and I will touch upon only the most important and basic subjects in this installment. Nevertheless, in the coming months I will continue to write and send submissions to The Beat detailing as much of this knowledge as would be deemed just. Provided The Beat Within editors are willing then these imminent pieces will be fit for printing.

Like I said, these people in government and the shadow government, which rules over the elected government, are gangsters. In their eyes we don't have rights. One thing they believe is that planet earth is a prison of no exit. To them reincarnation is not a theory — it's a fact. This world is everlasting heaven and hell and the only rules are the ones which those in power make. The rules which everyone else follows are created to serve exactly that purpose: Control. 'Cause if you can't think for yourself you need someone to

think for you. That's not evil, that's just being real.

To the power elite there is no 'good vs. evil', there's just life — the game of power.

C'mon, look at the incarcerated world. As convicts we arrive at the penitentiary and we gotta prove that we ain't weak, that we sure as hell ain't punks and that we're down. If someone goes inside your house and jacks you for your radio, shoes, your food, and personal belongings then you got two choices. Really there is no choice — you must confront the fool who jacked you and handle up. You might not get your stuff back but you'll hang onto your respect if you take the dude out. And you do this to send a message to all would-be thieves that you are not to be messed with.

Supposing that you didn't do a damn thing about your stolen property, then what? Expect for the rest of your belongings to be stolen tampered or abused: your body, soul, and heart.

We know the penitentiary rule: if you're not willing to fight for what's yours then you don't deserve it. The same rule applies throughout the whole world.

In other words, planet earth is a prison and the power elite are not the wardens and guards. They just psyched you out into believing that they got the keys, but they don't. They're convicts just like the rest of us, part of a bigger prison family than you ever imagined. A much stronger more organized and much older penitentiary gang than you thought was possible.

So what? Are they wrong or evil for choosing their affiliation? Hell no. Are you wrong for choosing your set or town or gang? No. The thing is, they tricked you into believing that what you're doing is wrong when all along they're doing the same you are except bigger and better.

A big difference between the elite and the citizen is that for the power elite this 'game' is spiritual. The street gangsta prays that he'll be forgiven for what he did so he can get into heaven after death. The elite need not be forgiven nor do they desire it. For the elite this game might end at physical death but the end of one game does not by any means indicate the end of the season. A season in the game involves lifetimes.

Reincarnation is a fact to the elite. They know this because of spiritual technologies, which most people don't use. The Bible and Qur'an give warnings to the average citizen so that they do not practice these arts: sorcery, soothsaying, etc. But the Bible also condones these arts to be properly utilized by the elite. It may sound like a contradiction or hypocrisy but it's not.

When my older brothers came of age they were allowed to smoke and drink but I was prohibited from doing so at the same time as them because I was still too young. Was my father a hypocrite for letting my older brothers drink but for denying me? Of course not. My father was just being real.

Though we all be children of god, we are not all of the same generation. And this is a great mystery I will touch upon later, but in order to be properly comprehended we must first become aware of how the elite perceive and understand the Bible and Qur'an.

In the shadow realm of world politics spirituality reigns supreme. But whereas most people connote 'spirituality' with being a 'good guy' the power elite define spirituality by one's manipulation of reality. Whereas most people follow the rules here in order to obtain a reward in the afterlife, the elite view this life right now as the afterlife. They live in a world where everything is up for grabs and where the victor writes the law, writes history, creates reality. This is heaven. This is hell.

Is their mindset much different from the young hustlas on the cut doing whatever it takes to be the top dog? No. The difference is that they get away with it.

Should people hate on the elite for their use of cunning and intelligence when we ourselves do the same thing in the penitentiary, in the barrio, in the hood? Damn homeboy, if you can do your thing and not get caught — more power to you.

An extremely critical distinction between the elite and

continued from previous page

the masses is that the masses who believe in the truth of the Judeo-Christian and Muslim scriptures have a very limited understanding of the word. By and large, most persons believe in the concepts and theological postulations received by mainstream religious authorities. But as all Americans should know, just because someone is an authority by no means is this person correct, gifted, or more enlightened than the average civilian. The only critical difference in most regards is simply that the authority figure seized power and influence. How many citizens today who are more talented and intelligent than most cops, or politicians do not become cops and politicians? Same goes for religious authority.

Since the beginning of religion there has always existed a separation between the priesthood and the faithful. As time progressed another separation arose between the visible priesthood and a secret priesthood not known by the public.

The Bible is quite explicit in indications regarding the differences between spiritual milk and spiritual meat. Milk for babies, meat for grown ups. Hebrews 5:10-14 and Matthew 13:9-17 are certainly the boldest verses in regards to the secret tradition as well as Corinthians 3:1-2.

Not everybody is ready to understand the mysteries simply because most people can't handle the truth. The law given by god to the human race is not the same as knowledge of the mysteries of god, of the kingdom of heaven. The law of moral conduct is given to those who are not yet come of age so that their suffering might be alleviated. It is for those who are poor in spirit that they may live more peaceful lives here and hopefully in the beyond.

But knowledge of the mysteries is for the few. It's not because the masses are 'unworthy', it's because the mystery is fire and fire burns.

Just as paper or plastic cannot conduct electricity so it is that younger souls that have not fully developed their spiritual talents cannot be ministers of the flame.

Most people look but they don't see. Most people hear but they don't listen. Who amongst us see with our own eyes and feel with our own hearts? If the average person finds it difficult to understand earthly things, how much more difficult will it be for him to understand things of another realm?

This piece is written for those on the verge of a new understanding. This is written for those on the edge of an awakening. I'm not expecting anyone to agree with these words. The only thing I want you to comprehend is that the power elite very much believe these words. Whether these beliefs are true or not is not the issue at hand. The issue at hand is that the rulers of this world hold these beliefs to be very true.

My knowledge does not come from books, but rather books are written about my knowledge. Instead of seeking answers from priests or books, I sought from the source of all knowing. Rather than take things on faith, I gained direct experience. Having eaten of the serpent's gift I had no choice but to storm the gates of heaven by force. And you know what? God loves that... if you're ready, that is.

For the sake of credence perhaps a brief presentation of my credentials are in order...

My first initiation into the occult took place in the summer of '93 at the age of 16. Approaching my 18th birthday I was admitted into a Freemasonry lodge of the Ancient Toltec Rite, yet my work was focused on the reawakening of a much more ancient current outside the reach of most Masons today — which the Masons of tomorrow will surely know. At the age of 20 I got arrested for somewhat high profile crimes, which would not allow me to get off the hook — regardless of beneficial connections. I'm serving a 10-year sentence with 18 months to discharge. In December '98 I took the formal vows of a monk of chaos and have continued my labors as a priest of the left hand path — the past three years in Ad Seg.

ABE BACOS (CONT.)

I don't play games, per se, except for the game we call life. But I can openly declare my status without fear of repercussions and would not under any circumstances claim something I am not — because there are consequences to be paid if one involved in this steps out of line. Nevertheless it is my task to present various facets of this much misunderstood issue to the general public.

I certainly have the choice of submitting pieces on these issues to other, perhaps more well-known or more widely read publications but I chose The Beat Within. And why did I choose The Beat?

'Cause we're all locked up. And those readers who are not incarcerated sympathize with those who are imprisoned. The Beat Within is street and that's where my heart's always been and will be. The streets are a wilderness with no vegetation in which humans are the only beasts. Some of us have cultivated ourselves and our sense of human dignity has never faltered. But others never gave much thought to being human in the first place and became lower than animals as a result. I say this because animals still possess sharp instincts but a human who has not developed the faculty of thought has neither reason nor instinct.

Now peep this, the power elite consider all humans, especially themselves, to be just another beast of the wilderness. And it's true. All these sentimental representations of the human race are not held by the power elite and this in turn makes it very easy to maintain that cold distance between them and the masses.

They ain't on no depression trip and they sure as hell ain't got no guilty consciences about what they do. All of us who've been in the street game have experienced great loss and setback. Either we got football number sentences, got homies that were killed or family members who have suffered as a result of our involvement in the game.

The power elite have experienced none of this. Everything has been 'consequence-free balling'... until now.

And I say 'until now' because shhh is gonna hit the fan for everyone world wide — none will be exempt from what is upon us.

Anyone with half a brain knows that global warming is very real and it is the root of the monster category 5 storms that hit the Gulf Coast last summer and which will hit again. But what the elite know that you don't is that humans are not the cause of global warming. Those of you who have studied Ancient Mexico are likely acquainted with the indigenous calendar which gives the date of December 23rd, 2012 as the end of the 'Quinto Sol' or fifth sun whereby this world will be engulfed by Tanatiah's (the Mexican name for the Egyptian God 'RA') flames.

In short, there will be a once-in-every-10,000 year alignment of all the planets from the sun to Saturn. Is it any coincidence that every 10,000 years we either enter or exit an ice age and that every 10,000 years our planet's magnetic poles shift? The poles are shifting as we speak. In fact airplane pilots can no longer use magnetic compasses to determine directions because of the unreliability of the earth's natural magnetic poles.

The elite know that this is the upheaval; the overturning is now. Even if carbon dioxide emissions were nil the earth would still be heating up. Our sun is very, very sensitive right now and I'll be happy to explain the details of this in a future piece.

For now it will suffice for me to give you this heads-up. Depending on The Beat Within's receptivity to my word (be it indifference or enthusiasm) more installments will follow or not be submitted at all... In truth and unending futurity...

If you can't think for yourself you need someone to think for you.
That's not evil, that's just being real.

PAUL JAY REED

We're not sure how much of what Paul Jay Reed has learned is self-taught and how much is the product of formal education, but we are sure he is one of the wisest Beat Without writers we've ever had the pleasure of publishing. Here, while acknowledging the importance of keeping your body in shape, he reminds us of how much more important it is to keep your mind and soul in shape. We don't know how he fell into the system's rapacious jaws (and we're curious precisely because he knows so much), but whoever else is held captive should pay very close attention to the message that follows. If the old saying is true that "Beauty is only skin deep," then this gifted writer has revealed a deeper beauty — one that he urges all our readers to pursue. Paul shares his beauty from his jail cell in Beaumont, Texas.

Push-Ups And Shadowboxing Isn't Enough

"Physical exercise has some value, but spiritual exercise is valuable in every way, because it promises life both for the present and for the future."

-Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 9:26 (International Readers Version)

"I do not fight like a boxer who hits nothing but air."

-Apostle Paul, 1 Corinthians 9:26 (International Readers Version)

The two most common things guys want to do while incarcerated are build their bodies and augment their boxing game. The two most common reasons: to prepare themselves for prison life or to look good for the ladies when they get out. Each day I see men doing push-ups and shadowboxing with relentless determination, hoping to look like Lee Haney and fight like Mike Tyson. I've been working out for many years and I'm always happy to see men doing things to stay physically fit. Yet, in many ways I am troubled by what motivates some men. Too many men in jail have a caveman's perspective, believing that a conquered opponent and an attractive, sexually willing woman equates to success.

Good boxing skills do not prepare a person for the psychological battles that prison brings, nor will it make him a good contender for parole. It may help him defend himself against violent physical assaults, but fists are no weapons against racism, peer pressure, addictions, loneliness, or depression.

The greatest battles we fight require patience, inner fortitude, courage, self-honesty, humor, and an intelligent mind. Our greatest battles are fought on the battlefield of our minds. Developing a strong body is good, but neglecting our minds and spirits will leave us defenseless against our greatest enemies. Mike Tyson trained hard to become one of the greatest fighters ever, but underdeveloped character made him a big loser in everyday life situations. His fists earned him millions, his lack of discipline left him penniless.

What good is a lightning fast left jab when facing a judge who has the power to put you away for life? It takes more courage to face the man in the mirror than it takes to face the biggest bully. Being able to bench press 500 lbs. doesn't mean you are strong enough to deal with life. Bertie Fox was one of professional bodybuilding's strongest men, but wasn't strong enough to deal with a heartbreak without resorting to murder. Yet, Gandhi was a 90 lb. weakling, but was strong enough to lift an entire nation and carry it on his shoulders.

A strong body with a weak mind is still a weak man. A man who can bench press 500 lbs., squat 700 lbs., and dead lift 1,000 lbs., but who can't read or write, is illiterate. A man who is good with his fists, but can't control his temper, is a danger to society. A handsome, well-built man who doesn't set sexual boundaries is considered a pervert. A man with a 90% free throw average who can't score above 60% on scholastic exams is called a dummy. A youngster who stays all day in the gym or on the court, but can't stay in school is a loser. And a man who is potent enough to impregnate a woman but unable to support his child is a deadbeat father.

The hardships of prison life don't just require our ability to fist fight. They require an intelligent mind. When I was a kid living in San Francisco, I had to face bullies every day. I was such a small kid that I got picked on a lot. I often found myself confronted by gangs of bigger kids who enjoyed nothing better than cliquing on me. My mother enrolled me in a martial arts school, hoping I would learn to handle myself better, instead of having my lunch money, school supplies, and toys taken daily.

Of course, I believed the training would turn me into the next Jim Kelley. After my first six weeks of training, the instructor decided to test me to see how much I had learned. He called out five older, bigger students and placed them before me. He asked me what is the best response, if they were about to gang up on me. After a few seconds, I said I should attack the biggest guy first. Though I was satisfied with my answer, my sensei shook his head in disappointment. He said, "No Paul. You run like a bat out of hell!"

Of course, we can't always run from bullies. His point was that self-defense begins and ends with intelligence. Malcolm X said self-defense is not an act of violence; it is an act of intelligence. An unintelligent mind cannot discern between self-defense and senseless, random violence.

The pecking order of society is not determined by our abilities to physically dominate each other. It is determined by how well we use our mental faculties and develop our natural gifts. Greatness is not rewarded to the man with the best body; it is achieved by a life well lived. Winning a fistfight is not the mark of success when you are losing in life through drugs, bad associations, and can't stay free.

Having a nice body is good. I've worked hard over the years to develop the body I have, and I'm proud of the results I've gotten — steroid free. And sure, there are women who are attracted to well-built men; but a woman who is only interested in the size of our biceps, pecs, and quads, and doesn't care if we have the inner qualities to go with it, isn't worth all the hours spent in the gym. Big biceps don't make a man worth having, no more than a big butt makes a woman worth having. I've learned the difference between a woman telling me, "I love built men," and her telling me, "I love you."

While we're developing our bodies, we should not forget there are more important things we need to develop. What impressed me most about Malcolm X was his determination to develop his mind and moral character while in prison. He educated himself. He enhanced his vocabulary by hand copying the entire dictionary. What determination! He read, read, and read anything he could get his hands on, and practiced everything he learned right where he was — in prison. He found a spiritual path in Islam to follow, and committed himself to cleaning up his life. He began by making better choices in prison. While others were hustling and doing whatever drug they could get in, Malcolm learned to not only say no but to do no. His determination to become an intelligent man with moral integrity was responsible for his success in public life.

Nathan McCall, author and writer for The Washington Post learned printing press while in prison. It led to his success as a writer. In his autobiography, "Makes Me Wanna Holla," he said that he knew if he wanted to stay out of prison, he had to learn to change associations. He would sit in his cell and practice by talking to a mop, pretending it was an old friend from the 'hood, trying to get him to get high or to go along with doing something wrong. Learning to tell that mop no was the practice he needed to help him tell his former cohorts no when he got out. It worked.

I don't deny the importance of physical exercise; too many men neglect their health. Good health is important, but it's not the only thing. Developing mental and moral health through daily exercises in making good decisions is more important. If you work on your body while locked up, and forget that bad choices is what got you where you're at then you will end up being the best built guy the judge has ever sentenced the next time; and it's only a matter of time. If you don't start exercising better choices now, you are less likely to avoid the same pitfalls as before. If you do not find a spiritual path to follow towards freedom, the road you do take will only lead back to incarceration.

It's not our fists we need to develop to fight the things that keep us in trouble. Most of us have a hard fight ahead of us and, until we develop a stronger character, we will continue to lose this fight.

Go ahead and get yo' swol on; do whatever it takes to get fit and strong. But, at the same time, get yo' learn on, start disciplining your mind, find a narrow, spiritual path to follow to a better life and follow it with the same determination you use to build your body. Learn to fight, using your greatest weapon — your mind.

Hip Hop and Our Future

With all of the commotion going on around the Bay Area in relation to our recent re-recognition by the mainstream hip-hop and rap industry with the HYPHY movement 06', I couldn't help but notice the message being delivered to today's youth. For those who pay attention to lyrics breaks down to, if you want to have fun then thizz and go nuts. I feel rap artists in general need to be a little more thorough when it comes to the message they are getting across. But if you look at the Bay, Bay Area artist more than most should try to be a little more careful when it comes to lyrics and the image they are displaying to the community because I see a lot of kids being influenced in the wrong ways.

A few weeks back my friend lent me a DVD which had Keak Da Sneak's, "Super Hyphy" music video on it. In the video he is in a setting which is supposed to be a replica of a middle school classroom with a class in session. While it seems like a good thing to have kids in the video, I disagreed with it because this song isn't for this age group, feel me? Its great to have the kids in there and all, but if you look at the lyric, they are intended for an older age group, people who are old enough to know the difference.

Plus, exposing these kids to these songs can potentially lead to the destruction of our tomorrow. Kids are paying attention to lyrics. One of them states, "and the definition of Hyphy is poppin' pills and hitting lines." And even in the intro to the music video, there is a scene where Keak and some other kids are having a spelling bee and the word HYPHY comes up. Keak then asks the supposed to be spelling bee judge to use it in a sentence. The one given was, "Me and my homies popped purple pills and went hyphy at the sideshow." Ok now a majority of us know that poppin' pills means taking ecstasy, and although some of us know the effects of ecstasy, some younger generations don't, and might see it as something grown folks do to have fun. And in their race to grow up too fast, do the drugs to feel like they older homies.

I've seen a lot of youngsters doing key shots, thizzin' or shhh like that, thinking that it's coo' 'cause "Keak" said so. It's a sad but true fact that still remains and will forever... people's character in general are somewhat affected by the music they listen to.

Another trip is this. Look back at all the songs that came out of the Bay Area. When was the last time you heard a positive influential song come out of the Bay Area? Songs like "dream" or Naz's "I know I Can". I think the last positive songs from the Bay came out of

NICK JONES One of the great pleasures of working for The Beat is seeing a young man like Nick Jones, aka Daddy, grow up in mind and spirit. This young man has traveled a long road, from gang banging on the streets, to juvenile hall to state prison, to a long parole — and finally to complete freedom. But it is not just the freedom of his body that he has secured, it is also the freedom think in a new way, and to challenge orthodoxy. As he has become the responsible man he is, he has seen the need for the exercise of responsibility in rap music. He takes Bay Area rappers to task for glorifying the thug life to kids who adopt the messages they hear in rap. While he celebrates their artistry, he asks that they think about the word they want to inhabit — and the world we'll all inherit if those with influence over the young don't act responsibly. Nick wrote this piece while working at The Beat. We first met Nick when he was a detainee in San Mateo's Hillcrest Juvenile Hall Facility.

2pac's mouth. 2pac died in '96! Think about it, if all these kids ever hear is hard core thug shhh then they gonna be hard core thugs. People are forgetting how to live life. Positive songs are like wake up calls to let everyone know that we are all here together and just to keep faith 'cause everything will be all right. Which makes me think, everything isn't gonna be all right.

Look at our older generation, deemed the X Generation. Then there is this generation which I wouldn't be surprised if they called it the Hyphy Generation. And lord only knows what the next generation is going to be like. You have to look at the whole picture. Things are just getting worse and worse.

Now this is not to say that everyone is messin' up, but a lot of people are. Those are the ones that really need to read this and re-evaluate what they are doing and see if it really makes sense.

I think that people in general have forgotten how to enjoy life. All of us go through things, but it's hope for a better tomorrow that keeps us going. And since the Bay Area rappers know that they do influence a lot of today's younger minds, they should try to promote a more positive message. Shhh, bring the old school hip hop back. Back when it was just rhyming to the beat, not finking in the street. Think about it ya'll cause the way things are looking, if hip hop won't change neither will the streets.

So to all you rap artists out there, do your thing, but keep in mind that with the fame and glory comes responsibility. Help keep our future pointed in the right direction. SAVE HIP HOP AND SAVE OUR FUTURE.

Think about it, if all these kids ever hear is hard core thug shhh then they gonna be hard core thugs.

GERALD CHAVEZ Deep in the confines of High Desert State Prison sat a man on a mission to make his reality our vision. He sat down with pen and paper in hand and attempted to allow the world to understand what surrounds such a man. He came up with a brilliant poem titled, "Caged Up," and taught us why prison doesn't rehabilitate — how can it when it forces you to stay tough? So with that, we give you a BWO section that he's on. Tell us what you think but before that please read on.

Caged Up

Locked in a cell
With concrete walls
Old chipped paint
And a steel bathroom stall

A metal bed frame
Colored gray nothing bright
Scratched up floors
And a glowing white light

Recycled air
Flowing through the vent
The smell of depression
A sullen scent

Constant yelling
And prying eyes
Surrounded by people
Full of anger and lies

Cuffed on the move
And shackled down
Whenever you walk
There's guards all around

Guns always loaded
Sights always drawn
One act of aggression
And your life could be gone

Ten-minute showers
And back to the cell
Knife fights and fist fights
A never-ending hell

Alone with our thoughts
As the years go by
Life without freedom
Caged up 'til we die.

EL BALA

Yes, this name is new because this is a first time writer for The Beat. And though he's writing for the first time, his wisdom seems more familiar to us than we were expecting. In his letter to the readers of this fine publication, El Bala challenges youngsters who think they're tough to come to prison. He almost guarantees that these youngsters will break. Hopefully this piece, which is sent from Pelican Bay, will be enough to make you realize how bad a place prison is, but if not, we're sure El Bala will give you the grand tour when you get there.

Shorty's Calling

Cry to heaven, cry from here
Death could be so near
We are from dust
We turn to ash
Everything is put to pass
We grow and we scrape our knees
Some will not make it to their teens
Life is hard
It's a lock
When will it ever stop?
Emotions stay within the heart
Pain and hate
Turns it to rock
You fight, you kill, you cry
Then end up in a box
Will it ever stop?
Life turns in a circle
It comes and goes while you remain,
But your heart is filled with pain
What could be done?
Everything is as hard as it comes
They are the ones that just don't think
And end up on their knees as they bleed
I have a cousin
Pain, stress, could die, so lonely
Who hurts when we're gone?
Mom, Pops, tears run, won't stop
We could avoid the pain that drives us insane
I'm here for you (Shorty)
Your cousin loves you
Stop the tears now!
That for years have ruined your brain
Run, but do not hide
I'll be here for you
Till the day I die
My hand is laid out for you
Because I know you love me, too
I'm sorry I wasn't there
For hard times and you despair,
But I say to you
Cry to heaven
Cry from here
I'll shed with you my tears....

Dear Beat Within Readers

I just finished reading the poetry that you youngsters write about your lives. It amazes me to see what y'all think about life. This is my first time writing to The Beat and it will not be the last. I'm a thirty-three-year-old Mexican doing life for murder in Pelican Bay Prison. Just another number: Estrada J-25281. I've been down for thirteen years and counting.

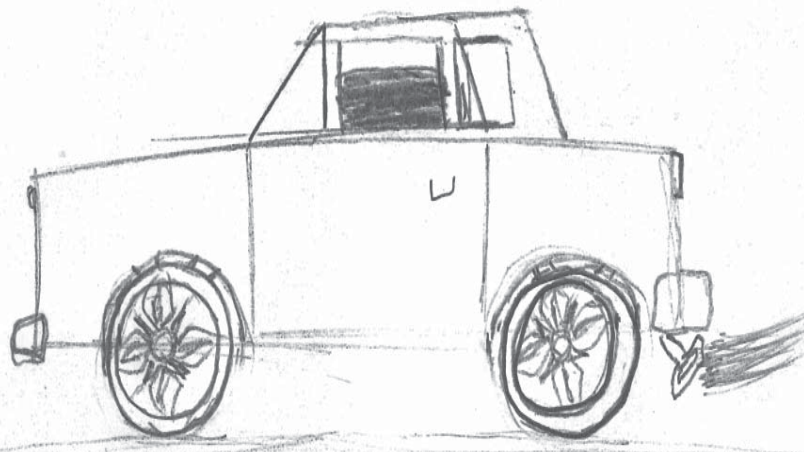
I do some poetry myself. Doing time is not easy and it comes with a lot of violence: People hating on one another and always trying to see who's the hardest. I guess you have to, to survive in prison. I'm currently writing from the hole. I'm doing a three-year hole time for being a knucklehead, but I got no choice. I'm already in the big house. Once you set foot in here, you belong to the system. It hurts me to see all these young teens getting into trouble for trying to act hard. I have a sister who is 17 years old. She writes to me about their crew. What crew! I tell her to look at my life. I used to belong to a crew. Where's my crew now! I'm doing life for the cause! What cause?

I've seen in here the toughest men break, get seriously hurt, and even murdered, and if these youngsters don't change their ways of thinking and staying in school, they will be the next casualty of the prison system. I'm challenging all you youngsters to be bad. Come to prison. Let' see how bad you can be. I bet you will break, so listen to my sound advice. Love your family, love yourselves, and stay in school.

If I could help in anyway to educate your mind about how bad it is in here, drop me a line, but do so if you want to live and not because you want to know about being bad. Stay strong people and don't give up on life because we care about you. Till next time.

I Remember You!

I remember you little brother.
I remember!
When you was a few months old,
Those precious moments will never grow old.
You used to cry a lot you know!
But I used to hold you and make you feel at home.
I would lay your tiny little body on my chest.
You used to love it.
It's where you got your rest.
Time passed by and you started to grow.
I remember!
You was about three years old.
You grew so attached to me
I didn't know what to do,
But I'd love you so much and I knew you loved me, too.
If I left the house, I had to hide from you to leave.
I remember!
If I didn't, you used to cry and follow me.
Johnny, I want to say I'm sorry for failing you!
You are my little brother and I ain't there to take care of you.
I made the mistake thinking that guns were cool.
Now I'm writing this poem from prison like a fool.
Learn from my mistakes, little brother and stay in school.
Graduate, make a life,
And have many children with a wife.
I'll always remember you little brother
And I miss you so much, too.
Be good and enjoy your childhood.
Don't mess up your life
Or you'll end up in prison like a dumb fool....



You're Not Alone

I know sometime you feel like you lost your soul to the devil?

But you can always reclaim your soul back,

If you reach within my friend;

Like the sky is naked without a sun, moon, stars, clouds, without your association I'm nude;

Like the river flows my respect

Flows to you, long before you knew you was a star,

God already knew you was a star;

Giving up on yourself is to say goodbye to better yourself

It's okay to "cry" it's okay to fall down on your knees, Because only you and the lord will know why, so don't be shy

Last night while I was asleep, my heart's eyes were awake thinking of you because I miss you, most of all I love you

So never think I abandoned "you" I'm always a part of you.

The Breeze

If you feel a breeze don't panic,

It's only me standing by you.

Though I'm here and you are there,

Just remember we will always be a pair.

Like a sunflower seed to a sunflower,

I'm of you and you're of me!

If I had wings I would fly to you,

If I knew magic I would appear before you – now!

Who am I? Your heart!!

MANUEL NAMOWICZ

Two weeks in a row! We welcome

back our old friend Manuel Namowicz aka Cisco, who writes in from Glen Mills School, in Concordville, Pennsylvania. We must say, we really like his piece, "Second Chance." We are also really appreciative of everything Manuel has given/offered us here at The Beat Within, dating back to his juvenile hall days in Santa Clara County.

No matter how much work you put in
You're never gonna be a
legend of the streets

Think Twice

A lot of us are wasting

At least two years out of our life

For something that happened in seconds

For something that we didn't think twice

We talk about family

Our girlfriends, brothers and sisters

About how they don't write and

It seems like they don't miss us

We put ourselves in this position

For something we called fun

Take this as a learning price

It's the only way that you'll feel better

So next time think twice

If it's worth all the fun

And pleasure

Second Chance

As I read through The Beat

JACKIE TATOS

When we receive love from the jail Rancho Cucamonga, CA, we know to brace ourselves for some thought provoking writing. Nothings changed as this next writer comes with two poems that show she has a gigantic heart. And a 'true story' that briefly touches the horrendous topic of rape. So read on and see if there are some similarities between you and her.

Not only has I been raped, it was by those who a person is supposed to trust the most, who provided me to those who raped (me).

True Story

You cannot take what is not righteous — yours. So to all my sisters of all nationalities, as well brothers if someone has raped you, violated your body in any manner, you're still pure within and pray to the Lord to help you get over any of your phobias.

You still can be productive in life as well very happy. A course "shame" plays a part of healing but seek a support group, form a prayer circle among friends/strangers, call out to (GOD), loud as you can and he will hold on to your hand.

Not only have I been raped, it was by those who a person is supposed to trust the most, who provided me to those who raped (me). Not my mother or father but law enforcement officers who set me up to be "raped" by other inmates. I say this as I end with who is the real criminal? I will have my day in court!

What's up, Beat?

I'm sending some poems that hopefully all you Beat readers out there will take heat to. One of the poems I'm sending you I wrote for a homeboy. He has a son and recently got back with the mother. Hopefully it will be helpful to give to your ladies too. I'm talking about all the homeboys out there, who are connecting to this poem.

I see so many people who just want
To get another chance at the streets

I see long lost stories
Unforgotten memories, and suffering

I see bad choices
But not bad people

I see dreams, leaders, and teachers
I see the good things in people
Stuck in a never ending cycle

If you're part of this poem
And have another chance to be free
Then do what you have to do
To get home for you and your family

Don't come back
No matter how much work you put in
You're never gonna be a legend of the streets
Remember you read this in The Beat

Most people look but they don't see. Most people hear but they don't listen. Who amongst us see with our own eyes and feel with our own hearts? If the average person finds it difficult to understand earthly things, how much more difficult will it be for him to understand things of another realm?

check out the rest of Abe Bacos' BWO piece on page 50

